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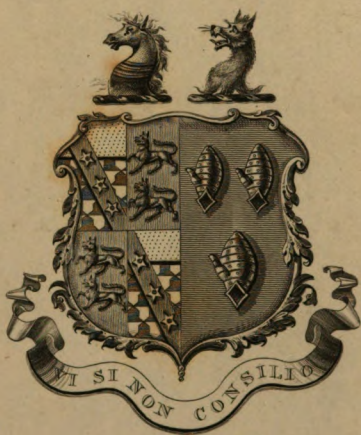
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Henry Sherbrooke Esq.
Oxton.

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A. C. Shadbroke
THE

MEDITATIONS

OF A

RECLUSE:

CHIEFLY ON

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

JOHN BREWSTER, M. A

VICAR OF STOCKTON UPON TEES, AND GREATHAM,
IN THE COUNTY OF DURHAM.

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1802.



TO
THE HON. AND RIGHT REVEREND
S H U T E,
LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM,
THE FOLLOWING
MEDITATIONS
ARE RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED
BY HIS LORDSHIP'S
DUTIFUL AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

JOHN BREWSTER.

Greatham, near Stockton,
1802.

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THE
MEDITATIONS
OF A
RECLUSE.

Nº I.

Reflections on Retirement.

*Retire—the world shut out ;—thy thoughts call home ;—
Imagination's airy wing repress ;—
Lock up thy senses ;—let no passion stir ;—
Then, in thy soul's deep silence, thus inquire.*

YOUNG.

I HAD formed a wish from the earliest times of which I have any recollection, that after having filled an active and useful department in life, I might retire from the public scene to the shades of rural solitude ;

B

not

not such a solitude as diminishes, or contracts, the power of doing good, but such as turns the exertion into a more peaceful channel; such as preserves the tranquillity of the mind, whilst it promotes and invigorates the activity of the body. A good providence has been pleased, in a great measure, to fulfil this my early inclination. From hence the reader will conjecture what sort of a RECLUSE appears before him.

Various have been the plans formed by those who have meditated a retirement from busy life, and various the modes by which such plans have been carried into execution. From a variety of circumstances, not originally the objects of consideration, such schemes have generally proved abortive. A false estimate of human happiness is the common cause of this miscarriage.

An entire seclusion from the world is as contrary to the true enjoyments of man, as a tumultuous intercourse with it. The philosopher who carries you back to the first principles of society, and places you in a desert, may offer a flattering picture to the mind of him whose irritable temper is
daily

daily teased with a multitude of petitioners; but it is a delusive happiness which he presents, like that of the deity of Epicurus, who is represented as sitting remote from every thing human or celestial; neither interested for himself, nor regarding the wants and necessities of others.

On the other hand, to be perpetually conversant in scenes where “the tide of human existence” is at its highest flood, to seek for true happiness in a crowd, is to deprive ourselves of that gratification which arises from a calm contemplation of the characters of men; for it is as impossible to reflect in the midst of the busy, as it is to rest upon the bosom of a torrent.

From the smallest observation, therefore, it will be evident that, the extremes of life are equally to be avoided. Man was no more formed to be carried rapidly around the circle of dissipation, than to inhabit the solitary cave, or to rest in inglorious ease, under the spreading branches of an impervious forest.

Every violence committed upon the human mind by an over-exertion of its
B 2 powers,

powers, tends to counteract and destroy those principles which they were intended to promote. The man whose wishes center in the stream of public life, rests his happiness upon a multitude, whose schemes and plans differ so essentially from his own, that they never can produce the solid comfort which he desires. He who narrows his expectations too much, and confines the sphere of his enjoyments to his own breast, is equally distant from the point of felicity. The one becomes a voluptuary; the other, a misanthrope.

To retire sometimes to the shade reflection, even from the affectionate intercourse of friends, is a judicious choice, as well as a religious injunction. The mind that has been distracted with cares demands some repose to rally its scattered forces. Some defilement too, it may be supposed to have contracted, from an indiscriminate communication with the world. How delightful then must that moment be, which is spent amidst scenes of solitude! How must the heart expand when it has broken its fetters, and freely breathes that air of liberty

liberty with which a benevolent Creator refreshes all his creatures! He who was so lately a prisoner, now becomes master of his own actions: he who was a criminal, looks around him in the confidence of innocence. The book of nature, illustrated by the book of revelation, becomes his study. He traces the connection between those important volumes, with a penetrating eye and a delighted heart. On his return to the busy stage of man, he finds his actions improved by benevolence. His temporary seclusion has taught him the true value of life, and he discovers that there are objects of equal importance with the bank and the exchange.

Thus may every man be a *Recluse* for the best and most important purposes. Thus may he improve in the study of his Maker, and in the knowledge of himself; and thus will he become a better servant of his God, and a better member of public society.

A little reflection will make it clear, how much the religion of the gospel promotes these advantages. I speak not of this religion, as delineated by the infidel, or dis-

torted by the enthusiast ; but of that plain and venerable figure whose features are serene and smiling, and whose eye beams with goodness. To pursue *her*, is indeed to pursue happiness ; and it is no small encouragement to follow her paths, that no man ever yet followed them in vain.

It has been the disadvantage of religion, too frequently to be represented under false appearances. The malevolent and designing have thus repelled her votaries, and delusion has superseded true belief. But these errors may be removed by solitude. A few calm collected moments will rectify these mistakes, and the gaudy colours of this deceitful rainbow will vanish, as the watry cloud disperses.

The employment of man in a temporary retreat from the world, is of the utmost importance to his eternal welfare. The prejudices which he has imbibed by too close a commerce with temporal concerns, the frequent lapses of human frailty, the more serious pollutions of human crimes, are all brought before his eyes in the shelter of retirement. *Here* truth begins to find a
refuge

refuge in his heart: and *here* the revelation of the God of truth, displays to his astonished and delighted senses, his restoration from the miserable bondage of the servants of sin, to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Who would not then, for this purpose, *retire* from human footsteps, and *shut out* the vanities and follies, the vices and allurements of *the world*? Who would not *call home his thoughts* which have been roving over dreary scenes, where peace and comfort never shew their beams? Who would not repress the excursions of a wild *imagination*, whose every step leads to danger and destruction? Who would not, under this impression, guard each avenue of *sense*, and check the ardour of each delusive *passion*?—Who would not, in short, accept the means of obtaining this great victory, and *in his soul's deep silence*, and in the silence of nature, *commune with his own heart*?

The subjects of meditation are numerous and important: as numerous as the wants, as important as the salvation of mankind. The man of a really contemplative disposi-

tion will require no assistance in the hour of solitary recollection: but as many may be desirous of profiting by a proper application of their retired moments, who cannot perhaps at once arrange the series of their thoughts, to such, it is presumed, the following reflections may not be unacceptable.

As becoming the character of *A Recluse*, and as congenial with my natural disposition, as well as my professional studies, I propose to consider man as a *religious being*; capable of cultivating religion for the most useful purposes of life. Polemical disputes, and even scriptural criticism, on this occasion, I wish to avoid. To make men *wiser*, I leave to the learned; to make them *better*, is the sole end of this humble attempt.

Nº II.

*Religious Retirement—moral and religious
Virtue.*

O sacred solitude! divine retreat!
 Choice of the prudent! envy of the great!
 By the pure stream, or in thy waving shade,
 We court fair wisdom, that celestial maid:
 The genuine offspring of her lov'd embrace,
 Strangers on earth! are *innocence* and *peace*.
There, from the ways of men laid safe ashore,
 We smile to hear the distant tempest roar.
There, bless'd with wealth, with business unperplex'd,
This life we relish, and insure the *next*.

YOUNG.

THE most ancient and eminent philosophers of the heathen world recommended their disciples to seek for wisdom in the retreats of solitude. They knew that contemplation ill agreed with the tumults of promiscuous assemblies, and chose not to frequent the concourse of cities. Some of them imagined that society, even upon the
 B 5 smallest

smallest scale, was a dangerous interruption of their favourite pursuits ; and Pythagoras enjoined his scholars, for the first five years, to *hear only and be silent*. The doctrines of the divine philosopher, of whom Cicero says, “ I had rather err with Plato, than “ with others find the truth,” were received with greater applause, because they were inculcated amidst the groves of Academus. A greater than Plato or Pythagoras, a greater than Moses or the prophets, led his disciples into a mountain apart ; sometimes for the purposes of devotion, sometimes for instruction, and once for the illustration of his glory. The conduct of the divine personage, in this, as in all other parts of his behaviour capable of imitation, affords us an example which cannot be too minutely followed. The solitary hermit, or the sorrowful anchorite, does not appear before us ; we are neither expected to lacerate our bodies, nor distress, by painful severities, the finer feelings of our nature. On the contrary, the world is the Christian’s school, and retirement the spot where he must ruminate upon his lessons.

When

When the good man moves into this scene of contemplation, he must endeavour to draw such a veil before his eyes, as to shut out every prospect, but that which ought to be the object of a good man's search. By a communication with the world, he has already found out what the world produces: and if his reflections on his situation be equal to the importance of the subject, he will discover that the value of life depends upon its use; and that the exertion he ought to employ, should be in proportion to the prize which he expects to gain. Precarious is that man's pleasure, fallacious is that man's hope which fixes its foundation on worldly wisdom. Even moral virtue, so eloquently described, and so imperfectly practised by the heathen philosophers, became a deceitful director of their conduct. Virtue!—said Brutus on the plain of Pharsalia, when he was about to revenge the death of Cæsar on himself, “Virtue! “I thought thee a substance, but now I “find thee an empty shadow!”

Can a more degrading picture present itself to the eye, can a more sorrowful reflection,

flection impress itself on the heart, than that which arises from a perusal of part of St. Paul's letter to the Roman christians? The Romans, at that period, though somewhat fallen from the original greatness of their character, were the most civilized nation on the globe. In what shape did virtue appear amongst them? or rather did she appear at all? and was she able, by her own intrinsic worth, to banish vice from the face of the earth?—At no period, perhaps, can that wholly be expected. The imperious passions of human nature forbid it. But surely little could be hoped for, when those “who professed themselves “wise became fools;” when they who *knew God*, refused him their obedience; when they not only partook freely of all the detestable vices of the vulgar, but “*had “pleasure in those that did them.*”

Such philosophers, whether *in* the world, or *out of* the world, will not meet with the approbation of the good; or even, (vain though they are), the applause of their own hearts. A solitary instance, perhaps, may sometimes be found amongst them, which displays

displays a more than ordinary combination of the moral virtues. But how often is such a character debased by some secret alloy? We turn our eyes with pity from the poniard of Brutus and the sword of Cato.

To a real defect in principle we may ascribe this general failure in the conduct of the wisest heathens. The greatest abilities were united with the severest study; but not having a light strong enough to direct them, they were lost, as in the mazes of a wood. From reflection, indeed, some of them discovered, and acknowledged, the existence of a deity; but when they attempted to raise a structure on this foundation, their opinions branched out into the most fanciful appearances. This important truth they sometimes proclaimed, and sometimes buried under a mysterious ceremony; whilst the common people, unable to reason on the one side, and unwilling implicitly to obey on the other, were distracted by a multitude of contending thoughts, and led astray by a variety of seductions.

The system of nature, the system of Rousseau and the philosophers of the French school,

school, appear not with more engaging features, than the picture I have just delineated. It is no pleasing employment to unveil the face of nature under this impression; but as truth is the object of our research, I shall reply only in the words of a countryman of their own, the amiable but unfortunate navigator, Mons. De la Perouse, in the narrative of his last voyage, published in consequence of a decree of the national convention.

After describing the miserable situation of the inhabitants of Port des François, on the western coast of North America, he adds, " In vain may philosophers exclaim
" against this picture. They write books
" in their closets, whilst I have been engaged in voyages during a course of
" thirty years. I have been a witness of
" the injustice and deceptions of these
" people whom they have described to us
" as so good, because they are very near
" to a state of nature; but this same nature is only sublime in her masses, she
" is negligent of all details. It is not possible to penetrate into woods, which the
" hand

“ hand of civilized man has not made
“ passable; to traverse plains filled with
“ stones and rocks, and inundated by im-
“ passable marshes; in a word, to form
“ society with man in a state of nature;
“ because he is *barbarous, deceitful, and*
“ *wicked*. In this opinion I have been
“ *confirmed by my own melancholy experi-*
“ *ence* *.”

“ My opinion,” says the same navigator
in another place, “ concerning barbarous
“ nations, was long since fixed; and my
“ voyage has only served to confirm it.

J'ai trop, à mes périls, appris à les connaître.

“ I am a thousand times more angry
“ with the philosophers who extol the
“ savages than with the savages themselves.
“ The unfortunate Lamagnon †, whom
“ they massacred, told me, the very even-

* Vol. II. p. 132.

† Lamagnon, De Langle, and ten others were massacred
at Maouna, one of the Navigator's Islands, during Mons. de
Perouse's voyage.

“ ing

“ing before his death, that the Indians
“were a worthier people than ourselves*.”

But as I write not to philosophers, as I write not to those who are ignorant of a *better principle* than that which influenced the heathen world, my pen naturally directs itself to enforce, what all are particularly interested in, the revelation of the gospel of Christ.

Do we wish to account for the irregularities which we have observed in human nature? we find them here. Do we look for the true motives on which all our actions should be founded? They appear before us. Every thing that can reconcile us to a variable world, every thing that can improve our condition, and comfort a desponding heart, may be met with in the book of good tidings. If our faith in this revelation be as firm as it ought, (and firm it cannot but be if we dispassionately consider it,) a prospect will open to our view which will recompense our severest sufferings, and the

* Vol. III. p. 412.

genial dew of heaven will gently fall upon our grateful bosoms.

Far be it from me to place *virtue* in a degrading light, or to rob her of those natural graces which Providence has bestowed upon her. Far be it from me to vilify the original distinction of right and wrong, or to depreciate those principles which have sometimes formed the discriminating qualities of uncultivated nations. My wish is to draw the diamond from the mine, and, by the polish of a new power, to render its utility as eminent as its beauty. This can only be effected by the pure doctrines of christianity. To produce this beneficial effect, morality and religion must flow together in the same channel. Religion, unaccompanied by the moral virtues, is like the barren fig-tree of the gospel: morality without religion, is too slender to support the reasonable hopes of man.

Let us retire then to the retreats of solitude, and by the aid of contemplation endeavour to unite these amiable principles. Let us from thence look back upon a world agitated by contending interests, and too
fre-

frequently the scene of tumult and of sorrow. Here let us repose without remorse and without resentment; and let us look forward with complacency to an hour of tranquillity and comfort. The assurances of the gospel bring these visions nearer to our view; we look upon them as a weary traveller on a delightful prospect; we consider them as the last retreat of the afflicted, the abundant reward of virtuous and laborious exertion. Admire that retreat, emulate that repose which enables you to distinguish between the deceitful colours of an affected philosophy, and the honest glow of true religion. Innocence and peace are the genuine offspring of so sweet a solitude. Though we hear the roaring of the distant tempest, we smile with thankful hearts at our own security; conscious that our support is not in this world, we rest with confidence on a better; and while we endeavour to relish those blessings which a kind Providence has spread around us, we are not forgetful to pursue those paths which lead to an happier, and more permanent establishment.

N^o III.

N° III.

*Inefficacy of moral Virtue independent of
Religion.*

Religion's All—descending from the skies
To wretched man, the goddess in her left
Holds out this world, and in her right the next.

YOUNG.

NOTHING can be more desirable than happiness.—To accomplish this state of ideal perfection has been the attempt of men of all ages and of all conditions, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the sage and the peasant. I mean not to point out in this place how many have succeeded in this pursuit, or how many have returned dissatisfied from the fruitless search. Discontent, however, is far from being my motive in making the observation. Though remote from the busy haunts of men, my seclusion is voluntary, and I know that,
with

with some abatements, happiness may be found under every colour of human life. If you add, that the same is true of misery, you will not be far mistaken. But in the midst of this chequered scene, Providence has kindly administered a cordial drop to invigorate our spirits and support our hearts. That drop is religion. "Oh! taste
" and see, how gracious the Lord is, and
" how blessed are all they that put their
" trust in him!"

Religion's all—and therefore cannot be that abstract principle which employs the reason of the philosopher only, nor yet that speculative doctrine which amuses the mind, and envelops the understanding of the visionary. Unless it be the object of religion to influence the *practice* of mankind by motives, which, without her help, they could not have discovered, or could not have applied to this useful purpose, religion would indeed have been nothing but a name. But when we find many appearances in the natural world cleared up by the view which revelation offers; when we are taught how the degeneracy of human nature may be healed,

healed, and are presented with the prospect of another world where every present inequality will be rectified, where virtue and goodness will be rewarded, and where vice will finally be punished, we exclaim in the words of the poet—

“ Religion ! Providence ! an after-state !

“ *Here* is firm footing ! *here* is solid rock !

“ *This* can support us ; all is sea besides.”—

I resume my unfinished argument in the preceding meditation, to point out the inefficacy of moral virtue independent of religion ; or rather to shew how the principles of morality may be exalted, improved, and perfected, by the will of God revealed in the gospel of Christ.

If we consider the motives on which moral virtues may be, and often are, performed, we shall find that they frequently differ essentially from that immutable love of goodness so strongly recommended in the writings, as well as conduct of the first followers of the gospel. These virtues, no doubt, are implanted in the heart of man
by

by the finger of his Creator; but that corruption, which we cannot but acknowledge, and that fall from original righteousness which is but too manifest in the habits of the world, so far deface their natural beauty as to render some other means necessary to establish and restore them. Every virtue almost may be practised in its turn, (there is no contradiction in the assertion) without making the person who performs it virtuous. Opportunity, constitution, and a variety of other circumstances will conduce to promote, or prevent, the execution of many moral virtues.

A man refrains from the indulgence of his appetites for the sake of his health, which he considers as the first object of his life. The end he looks for, he obtains. The strength of his body is equal to his exertions. He undertakes and accomplishes laborious enterprises; he acquires wealth and honour; and becomes the admiration of his neighbours. His nerves are well strung; and from an active youth, he passes on to an old age of vigour. If this life were the whole of this man's existence he would deserve commendation.

ation. His motive is *worldly*, and so is his reward.—The great object of another is convenience and reputation. Virtues, and no common ones, appear here also to support his plan. He is *diligent* in his calling, and *just* in his dealings. Unwearied attention marks all his steps. “He rises early and late takes “rest,” while any great design to aggrau-dize his projects remains unaccomplished. The world admire those virtues in him which they behold, and as they cannot penetrate beneath the surface of the heart, they know not that his plans are likewise *worldly*. And it is well they do not, for such melancholy discoveries afford too frequently the first rudiments of a suspicious character; a character that neither brings happiness to itself, nor distributes it among its fellow creatures.

These observations might be pursued, perhaps, through all the catalogue of human virtues. It is the motive which ennobles the action. If that has no respect to *the recompense of reward*, to the animating prospect of a future life, we act upon no fixed principle, and are as liable to commit crimes of the blackest die, where our interest is concerned,

concerned, as to promote those mutual advantages among men, without which society would totter upon a loose foundation.

But when we add religion to our morality, then our security becomes strong indeed. We are not left to *stumble upon the dark mountains* in search of a guide; nor to retire to some solitary cave and wait for the inspiration of an ideal goddess; but we have a rule brought home to our bosoms, and calculated to direct us in the most active situations of life. We have a Saviour, mild and benevolent, offered to our view, whose coming has established all the revelations which preceded him, and authenticated every prophecy concerning himself; and whose precepts and example have given us an unerring direction how to conduct ourselves in this world, that we may not cut off all expectation of the other.

Even in this illustrious example we find the motive of obedience eminently displayed. Though distinguished in the highest degree in all that he did or suffered for mankind, yet as Jesus condescended to take our nature and propitiate our offences in the form of
man,

man, the motives, as well as the feelings of man, are attributed to him : *for the joy that was set before him*, for the sake of that reward which was promised to so transcendent an instance of condescension and suffering, *he endured the cross, despising the shame.*

When these considerations are placed before us, it will be evident that our motives are defective, if we esteem *virtue as its own reward*. To give it the true taste of goodness, we must join it with religion, who “in her left hand holds out this world, and “in her right the next.” To practise virtue under this description, is to unite the advantages which this world affords, with those supreme delights which the next alone can offer. This is indeed self-interest in her fairest garb; and the happiness which we experience from the exercise of religious virtue, will only be exceeded by those celestial enjoyments which are adapted by a kind Creator to the situation of man, improved by his admission into the company of angels.

N° IV.

Reflections on Atheism.

This sacred shade and solitude, what is it?
 'Tis the felt presence of the Deity.
 Few are the faults we flatter when alone.
 Vice sinks in her allurements, is ungilt,
 And looks like other objects, black by night.
 By night, an atheist half believes a God.

YOUNG.

AMONG the several advantages to be obtained by solitude and shade, not the least is, that the mind is obliged to recur to its own exertions and search out its way to the original fountains of nature, the sources of eternal truth. Dazzled by the false lights of an interested philosophy, misled by the seductions of vice, we have sometimes seen the ingenuous man bewildered and unhappy. Unable to disentangle himself from this perplexity, unwilling perhaps to do so lest his deeds should not bear the scrutiny of unprejudiced reason, the doubter proceeds one step

step further, and takes refuge in a bold and unqualified atheism.

There was a time, at no very remote period, when I imagined that no such character existed in nature, as an atheist. That I am old fashioned, and in a great measure secluded from the world, must be my apology if I am rather of that opinion still. But as the present age has beheld this character publicly asserted in a national assembly, I may be allowed to take for granted that they intended what they said. And though a succeeding legislature decreed that there *was a supreme Being*, it bore the appearance of presumption, perhaps of policy and doubt, to affirm that which ought never to have been denied.

A poor Arabian of the desert, ignorant as most Arabians are, was one day asked, How he came to be assured that there was a God? "In the same way," replied he, "that I am able to tell by the print impressed on the sand, whether it was a man or a beast that passed that way *." This

* St. Pierre's *Studies of Nature*, Vol. II. p. 173. Eng. Trans. from Mons. d'Arvieux's Trav. through Arabia.

simple argument may serve instead of a volume upon the subject. The use of reason will instruct us in this truth; and in this manner many unenlightened nations have been instructed. I dare not affirm that the human race in every country has acknowledged the existence of a supreme invisible power. Some travellers have assured us that they have met with people without any traces of this important truth. Perhaps they have not themselves been sufficiently acquainted with their language or manners, thoroughly to ascertain the assertion. It is certain that in all our late voyages of discovery, religious ceremonies have been found, and amongst the wildest natives of the southern ocean, symptoms of reverence for some unknown being continually prevail. And can it be otherwise where the God of nature has distributed the blessing of reason and reflection? Can it be otherwise where "the eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear with hearing?" The most untrained savage must make the observation of the Arab, when his mind in-
forms

forms him that, there can be no effect without a correspondent cause.

“Suppose a chain,” says a philosopher*,
 “hung down out of the heavens from an
 “*unknown* height, and though every link
 “of it gravitated towards the earth, and
 “what it hung upon was not visible, yet it
 “did not descend, but kept its situation;
 “and upon this a question should arise,
 “*what supported or kept up this chain*;
 “would it be a sufficient answer to say,
 “that the first or lowest link hung upon
 “the second (or that next above it) the
 “second, or rather *the first and second to-*
 “*gether* upon the third, and so on ad in-
 “finitum? For what holds up *the whole*?
 “A chain of *ten* links would fall down un-
 “less something able to bear it up hindered;
 “one of *twenty*, if not staid by something
 “of a yet greater strength in proportion to
 “the increase of weight; and therefore one
 “of *infinite* links certainly, if not sustained
 “by something *infinitely* strong, and ca-
 “pable to bear up an infinite weight. And

* Wollaston's Religion of Nature, p. 67.

“ thus it is in the chain of causes and
“ effects, tending, or as it were *gravitating*
“ towards some end.”

Every visible part of nature, animate or inanimate, is a link in this chain which ascends by regular gradation to the first and infinite mover of this vast machine. In the scale of beings there is a close and intimate connection from the sluggish life of an oyster, through the different improvements of the rational faculties of man, to the intelligence of an angel. But no part of this series, however closely united, is the efficient cause of any other. For that we must look upward ; and unable to comprehend the mode of existence of the Supreme Being, must acknowledge who it is that
“ has measured the waters in the hollow of
“ his hand, and meted out heaven with a
“ span ; and comprehended the dust of the
“ earth in a measure ; and weighed the
“ mountains in a scale, and the hills in a
“ balance. Behold the nations,” proceeds the sublime Isaiah, “ are as a drop of the
“ bucket, and are counted as the small dust
“ of the balance ; behold he taketh up the
“ isles

“ isles as a very little thing. All nations
“ before him are as nothing, and they are
“ counted to him as less than nothing, and
“ vanity. To whom then will ye liken God?
“ or what likeness will ye compare unto
“ him ?”

The arguments of scripture, however forcible, make no impression upon the atheist. The deductions of reason are his weapons ; and miserably does he use them, when he thus fights against heaven. But scripture itself refers to reason for the acknowledgment of this great truth. The legislator of the Jews opens his important history with great sublimity of language. He does not languidly commence his narrative with a laboured proof of what no man ought to dispute ; but at once boldly asserts the creation of a magnificent world, proceeding from an acknowledged and infinite Creator—“ In the beginning *God* created
“ the heavens and the earth.”

As it is the *interest* of a good man that there should be a supreme Ruler of the universe, for a supreme Being cannot but be infinitely good, and a rewarder of virtuous
c 4. actions ;

actions ; so it is the *interest* of the wicked, arguing upon their own principles, that there should be no superintending power over the conduct of mankind. Can we be surprized then that perverted reason, operating upon habitual wickedness, should blind the eye of the understanding, and ascribe to chance, to any thing, the construction of a world which nothing but the highest wisdom could produce, nothing but the most consummate power could perpetuate ? The atheist is afraid to trust himself with a chain of reasoning which would overturn his false principles and deceitful pleasures ; and therefore buries himself in ten-fold darkness, in the miserable and melancholy shades of unbelief. But reflection will arise in the most impenetrable breast. *By night an atheist half believes a God.* The silence and solitude of the night, which exclude the external solicitations of pleasure, oblige the mind to a greater degree of recollection, a greater intenseness of thought, There is something awful in the surrounding darkness, something more than human in the prospect of the luminaries of the night.

night. The splendid orbs in the firmament of heaven appear sparks of divinity; we imagine them connected with some unknown order of beings. In such a moment, the Deity himself seems present. In such a moment, conscience, which no reasoning can totally subdue, will produce some glimmerings of intellectual light, which, by the blessing of that God whom the atheist denies, will shine still brighter and brighter unto a perfect day.

That day is more clearly revealed to those who believe the gospel of Christ. To those, further evidences are given of the being and attributes of God; evidences level to every understanding, and well calculated to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. But the sceptic, in the first instance, looks to other arguments. Let him examine those arguments with the most microscopic eye, and the closer he observes, the more they will bear his inspection. For, as Dr. Clarke concludes his admirable demonstration of this subject, “the notices which
“God has been pleased to give us of him-
“self are so many and so obvious; in the
“constitution, order, beauty, and harmony

“ of the several parts of the world ; in the
“ frame and structure of our own bodies ;
“ and the wonderful powers and faculties of
“ our souls ; in the unavoidable apprehen-
“ sions of our own minds, and the common
“ consent of all other men ; in every thing
“ within us and every thing without us ;
“ that no man of the meanest capacity and
“ greatest disadvantages whatsoever, with
“ the slightest and most superficial obser-
“ vation of the works of God ; and the
“ lowest and most obvious attendance to
“ the reason of things, can be ignorant of
“ *Him ; but he must be utterly without*
“ *excuse.*”

N° V.

On the Death of the Atheist.

Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die.

YOUNG.

IN reflecting upon the causes of infidelity, it has often appeared to me more consistent with reason as well as experience, to deduce atheism from immoral conduct, than to ascribe immoral conduct to confirmed and deliberate atheism; though, it must be confessed, that they are frequently the reciprocal causes and effects of each other. Let us suppose a man to have disentangled, as he would call it, his mind, from every belief of a supreme Being, from every expectation of a future state, and of course from every apprehension of future punishment; would he rush impetuously into every enormity of behaviour? No. Human laws would check his course. And as he reflects,

c 6

that

that if he loses his life, he loses *every thing*, he endeavours to postpone annihilation to as great a distance as possible. But even this consideration will not render him a good neighbour; for if his prospect of advantage be greater than his risque of life, there is nothing that he will not hazard to attain it.

In the other instance, atheism makes gradual advances. The mind becomes distracted with doubts in the same proportion as the conduct recedes from virtue. Having once been in the habit of computing the value of moral actions, he dares not commit himself to the unrestrained pursuit of vice, till he has satisfied, or attempted to satisfy his mind, that he may safely do so. Thus he commences an apology for sin. If there be a God, he knows that he must be the avenger of wickedness. But as such an acknowledgment would be misery for him, he cherishes the dreadful thought, that the world is left without a ruler, without a providence to direct it. Can we wonder, that a man, under these circumstances, should endeavour to take refuge in atheism? Can we be surprized that he, who deliberately

tramples

tramples upon divine and human laws, should deny the power, nay the existence of the framer of them both? The comforts of hope he can never possess, with such an horrible disposition of his mind; as he lives under an inconceivable distraction of imagination, he dies the martyr of despair.

“ Lord Cardinal ! if thou think’st on heav’n’s bliss,

“ Hold up thy hand—make signal of thy *hope*—

“ — He dies ! and makes *no sign* !—”

. But though the atheist may have no *hope*, it is certain, notwithstanding all his endeavours, that he will often experience many *fears*. The remonstrances of conscience will sometimes arise; and with greater violence as the hour of death approaches. “ Men may *live fools*”—fools, in the psalmist’s sense, who say that *there is no God*—“ but fools *they cannot die*.” When the moment of departure arrives, they shrink back from the apprehension of falling into nothing. And if at that important crisis, their imagination represents to them that they have been, through a long life perhaps, deluding their own hearts, that their unbelief was not the consequence of unprejudiced argument, but
of

of premeditated crimes, who can conceive the horrors of their situation? They wildly look around for help, but no man can help them. They turn their eyes on heaven in hope of mercy. To God's mercy indeed we must leave them, for there is no record of salvation that mitigates their case.

The deaths of Voltaire, and some of his unbelieving associates, are too recent and important events to be passed over in silence. The facts are too plain to be contradicted, and the lesson too striking to be withheld. In the midst of Voltaire's triumphs at Paris, he was arrested by the hand of death. "Here," says the Abbé Baruel, "let not the historian fear exaggeration: rage, remorse, reproach and blasphemy, all accompany and characterize the long agony of the dying atheist *." I shall not recite the minute horrors of this dreadful picture; but remark how earnestly he called upon that Saviour, whom he had stigmatized during a long life with the most dreadful appellation. "Oh! Christ! Oh! Jesus Christ!" he

* History of Jacobinism.

would cry out, and then complain that he was abandonèd by God and man. “ His “ physicians thunderstruck retired, declaring “ the death of the impious man to be terrible indeed. His friends fly from the “ bed-side, declaring it to be a sight too “ terrible to be sustained ; and one of them “ said that the furies of Orestes could give “ but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.”

D'Alembert on his death-bed betrayed the same symptoms of remorse, and would have exhibited the same scene, but for the vigilance of a *friend*. “ He was on the eve,” says the same author, “ of sending, as the “ only method of reconciliation, for a minister of that same Christ, against whom “ he had also conspired ; but Condorcet “ ferociously combated these last signs of “ repentance in the dying sophister, and he “ gloried in having forced him to expire in “ final impenitence.”

When Diderot was ill, who had also manifested some appearance of contrition, his philosophic friends removed him suddenly into the country, that there might be no witnesses of his mournful end.

Thus

Thus died the men who for many years had waged secret and open war, against the meek and benevolent Founder of Christianity; and yet whose opinions could not sustain them through the last, and most eventful moment of their lives. Whilst we behold the scenes of devastation which have followed the propagation of their pernicious principles, let us with ten-fold strength “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

As there is every reason to believe that atheism for the most part originates in vicious pursuits, it becomes necessary to apply the remedy to the foundation of the evil. Let it be represented that pure and undefiled religion, is the parent of sound morals and virtuous conduct; let it be demonstrated, that revelation promises and assures to us a future state, a truth which unbiassed reason cannot but acknowledge; let it also be fully understood, that reward or punishment is annexed to obedience or disobedience.

disobedience to those laws, whether written or unwritten, which relate to man as an accountable creature; and then, prejudiced indeed must that mind be, which refuses its assent that *there is a God which ruleth in the earth.*

“ I remember it is the saying of one,” says Tillotson *, “ who hath done more by his writings to debauch the age with atheistical principles than any man in it, That when reason is against a man, then a man will be against reason.” I am sure,” he adds, “ this is the true account of such men’s enmity to religion. Religion is against them, and therefore they set themselves against religion.—It is found by experience that none are more apprehensive of danger, or more fearful of death, than this sort of men; even when they are in prosperity, they ever and anon feel many inward stings and lashes; but when any great affliction or calamity overtakes them, they are the most poor spirited creatures in the world.” Indeed,

* Sermon II.

a bold professor of atheism there cannot be. The compunctions of conscience, which he cannot by any sophistry remove, prevent it. The reputed atheist, therefore, if you ever meet him in your passage through the world, suspect as a deceiver. The mask which he now holds before his face, will drop as he approaches the grave, and he will wish—how vainly *then*!—that he had not endeavoured to palliate his vices by infidelity.

In every age there has been too much reason to lament, that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;” yet as few instances, if any, have occurred, where wickedness took its rise from deliberate atheism, we may reasonably conclude that no such principle exists: but that wherever it appears to influence the conduct of mankind, it is raised up, as an hideous phantom, to vindicate the dreadful excesses of immorality. How far self-deception may be carried upon this head, is evident from a striking anecdote related by Sir Thomas Browne in his *Religio Medici* *. “It is disputed,” he says,

* Page 26.

“whether

“ whether there have been atheists or not ;
“ but what will you say of Vaninus, who
“ was burnt alive for atheism at Thoulouse
“ in France, anno 1620, who as he was
“ going from the prison to the stake, said
“ to those who led him, among other things,
“ Pray feel my pulse and see if you can
“ perceive the least emotion or alteration in
“ it ; you shall not find me utter the least
“ word of despair as your Christ did when
“ he was upon the cross. And when he was
“ brought to the stake, and felt the heat of
“ the fire, he cried out, my God ! my God !
“ A certain monk, who stood by, hearing
“ this, asked him, how he came to call upon
“ God now, since he had denied him all
“ his life before ? Upon which he answered
“ him, from the midst of the flames, *Sir, it*
“ *is only the manner of speaking.*”

The author of the book of Wisdom, in a beautiful strain of eloquence, imputes infidelity to a previous depravity of heart. He introduces the ungodly reasoning on the shortness of life, and on the final extinction of being by death ; and from these arguments

ments encouraging themselves in sensuality, injustice, and oppression.

“ The ungodly said, reasoning with themselves, *but not aright*, our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy : neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. For we are born at all adventure : and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been : for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart : which being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air, and our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof. For our time is a very shadow that passeth away ; and after our end there is no returning : for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present ; and let us speedily use
“ the

“ the creatures like as in youth. Let us
“ fill ourselves with costly wine and oint-
“ ments, and let no flower of the spring pass
“ by us : let us crown ourselves with rose-
“ buds before they be withered : let none of
“ us go without his part of our voluptuous-
“ ness : let us leave tokens of our joyful-
“ ness in every place : for this is our portion
“ and our lot is this. Let us oppress the
“ poor righteous man, let us not spare the
“ widow, nor reverence the ancient gray
“ hairs of the aged. Let our strength be
“ the law of justice : for that which is feeble
“ is found to be nothing worth. There-
“ fore let us lie in wait for the righteous ;
“ because he is not for our turn, and he is
“ clean contrary to our doings, &c.”

“ Such things they did imagine, and
“ were deceived : for their own wickedness
“ hath blinded them. As for the mysteries
“ of God, they knew them not : neither
“ hoped they for the wages of righteous-
“ ness, nor discerned a reward for blame-
“ less souls. *For God created man to be im-
“ mortal, and made him to be an image of*
“ his

46 *On the Death of the Atheist.*

“ *his own eternity.* . Nevertheless, through
“ envy of the Devil came death into the
“ world, and *they that do hold of his side*
“ *do find it.*” Wisdom, Ch. II. v. 1, &c.

Nº VI.

Reflections on Deism.

—And is there who the blessed cross wipes off,
As a foul blot, from his dishonoured brow?
If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight. YOUNG.

THAT a solitary Islander of the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by storms and tempests, and deprived, by his situation, of all intercourse with civilized society, should believe in the existence of some supreme invisible power, and yet should find himself unable to pursue his thoughts through a long deduction of arguments; that he should *see God in the wind*, and yet not be able to account for many appearances in the moral world, is no wonder: but that any one so prejudiced, should be found in these regions, where the light of the gospel has shone with the brightest beams, where the good and the learned have united their abilities

abilities to instruct him, is truly a matter of surprise. The reasoning which has been applied to the atheist, will, in many instances, attach itself strongly to the deist. However men of this description may differ in name, in principle they are frequently the same. The deist professes to be a believer in God, but he is an unbeliever in revelation; and therefore his belief is unproductive of those qualities which are derived from religion.

I object to the *name* which the deist has assumed. A true believer in God, as the name implies, cannot, consistent with his belief, reject all communication of the deity with mankind. Every system of religion yet known, Christian, Jewish, Mahometan, and even Pagan, allows a divine intercourse. And indeed if there be a God, he must be endowed with the most perfect attributes: he must be all-powerful, all-wise, and every where present. Where then is the absurdity in supposing that such a Being should reveal himself to the world? The absurdity is on the other side of the argument;

ment; for such a revelation is altogether probable, if we acknowledge his existence.

But allowing the propriety of the *name*, how shall we define the *belief*, or rather the *unbelief* of the deist? Dr. Clarke, in his celebrated work on the evidences of natural and revealed religion, says, that there are several sorts of deists, and particularly enumerates four. The opinions of the three former which he describes, if argued upon consistently, he says, must finally recur to absolute atheism. The opinions of the fourth sort, he ranks in a different class, for, he adds, “ if they did indeed “ believe what they pretend, they could “ not fail of being quickly persuaded to “ *embrace christianity*; for being fully convinced of the *obligations of natural religion*, and the certainty of a *future state of rewards and punishments*; and yet observing at the same time, how little use men are generally able to make of the light of reason, to discover the *one*, or to convince themselves effectually of the certainty and importance of the *other*, it is impossible but they must be sensible of the want of a revelation.”

To ascribe to *natural* religion all the virtues and good qualities which the world is sometimes so happy as to experience, is to adopt an effect without a correspondent cause. An amiable disposition of mind, united with a good understanding and an unremitting thirst after knowledge, may, perhaps, attain a degree of excellence which demands our admiration. But can we be assured that all these desirable qualities have been derived from nature, and none of them insensibly incorporated from an intercourse with civilized society? Can we ascertain the point where the acquirements of nature cease, and those of cultivation begin? Or can we tell which are *abstractedly* the gifts of nature, and which the communications of men?—But go to nature in her most retired haunts. Seek her in the forest and in the cave. Examine her propensities and her conduct. How does she appear? Alas! small are the advances she has made; few are her attainments in morals, as few as her acquisitions in arts and sciences. Tell us not then that nature is the only school for instruction. It is impossible to live as
a member

a member of public society, without being thoroughly convinced that this could never be the case.

But let us proceed further. What say the passions in a state of nature? St. Paul himself shall reply.—“ I know that in me
 “ (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good
 “ thing; for to will is present with me,
 “ but how to perform that which is good,
 “ I find not. For the good that I would,
 “ I do not, but the evil which I would
 “ not, that I do.—I see another law in my
 “ members warring against the law of my
 “ mind, and bringing me into captivity to
 “ the law of sin, which is in my members.”
 —This, I fear, is nature in her most
 common appearance. Is this then the
 state to which the wise and the good would
 wish to be reduced? Is this the object of
 the philosopher's desire? Let the Voltaires
 and Rousseaus of the age answer the
 question. It must be evident to any one
 who considers *this* picture of nature (for if
 he dresses up a divinity of his own he can-
 not expect any but himself to fall prostrate
 before her) that some great change must

have taken place in the moral world, since a great and good Creator spake all things into Being. The profoundest meditations of the wisest men could not explain this mystery. The Roman and Grecian sages were puzzled at the appearance of evil, and despaired of reforming the world. “All hopes of mending men’s manners for the future, (I use the often quoted words of Socrates) must be given up unless God is pleased to send *some other person* to instruct them.”

At the time of the reformation the deists began to arrange themselves into a party. Peter Viret*, an eminent reformer of Berne, in Switzerland, is said to have been the first who mentioned the name, and described the tenets of the sect. In the epistle dedicatory to the second volume of his Christian Instruction, he says, “There are several indeed who profess to believe that there is some deity or God, as the Jews and Turks do: but as for Jesus Christ, and all those things which the

* Bayle’s Dict. Article Viret, Vol. V. p. 482.

“ doctrine

“ doctrine of the apostles and evangelists
 “ testifies concerning him, they take them
 “ for fables and dreams.—I hear that some
 “ of this band call themselves *deists*, a new
 “ word in opposition to that of atheists.
 “ For the word atheist signifies one that
 “ is without God, so they would hereby
 “ signify, that they are not without God,
 “ because that they believe that there is
 “ one, whom they even acknowledge for
 “ Creator of heaven and earth, as well as
 “ the Turks: but as for Jesus Christ they
 “ do not know who he is, nor do they
 “ believe in him or his doctrine. *These*
 “ *deists of whom we speak*, he adds, *ridicule*
 “ *all religion, though they accommodate*
 “ *themselves to the religion of those with*
 “ *whom they are obliged to live, out of com-*
 “ *plaisance or fear.*”

This passage brings under our observation another description of deists, who through worldly motives mix with different societies of Christians, though it must be evident that they are totally destitute of all religion, whether it be denominated natural or revealed. At least every system

of religion is equal to them. They neither consult reason nor revelation in their practice. They live as without a God, and die without reflection. They neither possess the powers, nor cultivation of mind necessary to place them upon a level with those celebrated characters who have disgraced reason by the use of it, nor are they able to defend the doctrines which they espouse. Yet how large a part of mankind is here described? How many are there who abuse the liberty of opinion which is given them; and seize upon novelties which are void of any solid foundation, if they flatter those vices which they neither have power nor inclination to subdue!

It is with horror that the pious Christian looks around him in the world, when he beholds so large a multitude wipe off the symbol of religion from their *dishonoured brow*. He weeps, he supplicates the infidel *only* to open his eyes, and look upon the beautiful prospect which he rejects. If fair proportion and unspotted features be his delight, religion presents them before him. If inward complacency and unalloyed benevolence

volence can please him, he may behold them here. If an assurance that these sensations of pleasure shall be perpetual, that they shall all be restored in a future world to the happy possessor of them in this; if such an assurance can allure him to add himself to the number of the blessed, let him seek it in those rich and precious promises which are made by Jesus Christ.

Mere natural religion has nothing like this to offer. On the abstract principles of reason if an offence be committed, the offence must be punished. But what says the religion of Christ? It is equally with nature herself an enemy to the breach of the moral law; but it finds out a method, at the same time, to shew its abhorrence of the offence, and yet, on certain conditions, to pardon the offender. When St. Paul represented himself as in a state of nature, and reflected on the turbulence of his passions and evil propensities, he shrunk from the thought in the greatest agony of mind, and exclaimed, "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" that is, from this body

of death, from this load of iniquity, which cannot but subject me to the severest afflictions. In a moment his spirit revives within him at the prospect of his deliverance through the gospel: "I thank God," he adds, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Or perhaps it should be read, as it is an answer to a question, "The grace of God " through Jesus Christ our Lord." That Saviour who had assured him that his *grace was sufficient for him*, became his comforter, and will become the comforter of the most indignant infidel, if he will soften his heart with an inclination to believe.

N^o VII.

Influence of a future State on Man as an accountable Creature; applying to his Hopes.

Yet know, vain scepticks! know th' almighty mind,
Who breath'd on man a portion of his fire,
Bad his free soul, by earth nor time confin'd,
To heav'n, to immortality aspire.

Nor shall the pile of hope his mercy rear'd,
By vain philosophy be e'er destroy'd:
Eternity, by all or wish'd or fear'd,
Shall be by all, or suffer'd or enjoy'd!

MASON.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the arguments of the atheist and the opinions of some deists, I shall assume it as an acknowledged truth, that *there is a future state*. In doing so, independent of the christian revelation, I meet the unbiassed wishes; the earnest expectations of far the largest portion of mankind. In fixing our minds upon this point,

how glorious is the prospect presented to our view ! How does the present span of our existence shrink into nothing ! As from the summit of a high mountain, we look down upon the world, and see its towns and cities, its oceans and its promontories dwindle from our sight. The intricacies of worldly policy are absolutely invisible—"the murm'ring surge cannot be heard so high." Thus far nature ~~may be supposed~~ to have attended our steps, and assisted us in our research. But limited are the powers which she has given to man. See religion advance, and remove the film which obstructs our vision. What do we now behold ? The world, and all that it contains, is totally vanished. *New heavens and a new earth* appear before us. Even the body which we possessed is altered : "this mortal hath put on immortality." The prospect is too brilliant to be disclosed. The apostle represents the scene as too sublime for human imagination—"eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him."

Let the sceptic enjoy his gloom, the atheist his annihilation : the christian has other prospects, and will neither be reasoned out of his pleasing hopes, nor cheated out of his present enjoyments. When the man of religion argues with the sceptic, he has every comfort to place within his reach ; but when the unbeliever offers to reform the christian, he removes from his view all that has hitherto supported him : an impenetrable cloud is spread before his eye, and a dangerous gulph is opened at his foot. Let the unprejudiced judge on which side caution is most necessary. The wise man, surely, would rather *err* with the christian, than take part with the unbeliever.

I shall not proceed further, and draw a comparison between the lives of the christian and the sceptic. The severity of the one is not to be overcome by the benevolence of the other. Yet let him know that the *pile of hope*, raised by the mercy of a good Providence, is not to be destroyed by *vain philosophy*. *Eternity* depends not on the belief or disbelief of man. It is not even comprehensible by the faculties of human nature.

Though we are assured from the highest sanctions, of the endless duration of time, or rather that a period will arrive when time shall be no more ; yet it is not within the limits of our understandings to have any adequate conceptions on the subject. But the reality of a future state, and the distribution of future rewards and punishments, depend not upon subtilties. The sceptic, as well as the believer, will rise to experience this awful day of retribution. May the supreme Disposer of all events accept his ignorance as an apology for his unbelief ! But who shall intercede for the christian, if his conduct square not with his principles ? His Redeemer placed salvation before him. —If he dash the salutary cup from the hand of his restorer—alas ! who shall intreat for him ?

Whatever may be the loose principles we meet with in the world on the subjects of morals and religion, it is evident that the influence of a future state has considerable effects on man, whether we consider him *as an accountable creature, applying to his hopes, or his fears, as a member of society, or simply*
as

as an individual. If he believes at all in this important point, his conduct must be influenced by the hope of immortal happiness, or the dread of future misery. If he be conscious that he is accountable for his actions, and if he can neither accelerate nor retard the day of recompence, we cannot but suppose that he will be constantly upon his guard against the hour that he shall be called upon to render up his accounts. It is from religion chiefly that he learns this important truth : and it is with reference to this that he regulates his behaviour. He neither wants motives nor abilities to promote his plans. That Saviour whose merits must supply his deficiencies, and whose resurrection gives him an earnest of his own, becomes his guide and deliverer. Nor is this all : the invisible influence of the Holy Spirit directs his footsteps in many a slippery path, and *comforts* him in every danger. The world, for the wisest purposes, is uncertain in its pleasures. He tastes of misfortunes ; but with these supports he does not fall a sacrifice to despair. In the midst of his distresses, a ray of hope beams from
heaven,

heaven, and he looks forward in joyful expectation of that future happiness promised by the gospel. Intent on this, he discharges every duty, to the best of his abilities, which the gospel requires: and in faith resigns himself to that hour which closes the scene of mortal life. But not to the grave is his *better part* consigned. It enters into that bliss which had long been his contemplation, and partakes of those joys which are reserved for the righteous.

On such a character the influence of a future state is great. The reflection on it forms the chief happiness of his life, and is his sincere and only comfort on the bed of death. How do we pity those men of genius and abilities, who pretend at least not to be influenced by these motives! If they wish for such consolation, why do they not endeavour to procure it! Why do they lament, without endeavouring to investigate the evidence on which a future state is founded? or why do they investigate, without laying aside the inveteracy of prejudice? "I was reading," says Mons. Herault to Buffon, "one evening, some verses of Thomas on
" the

“the immortality of the soul—*pardieu!*”
“said he, *religion would be a noble present,*
“*if all that were true* *.” “*If there be*
“*another world,*” says Gibbon in a *consolatory* letter to lord S. on the death of his lady, “*she will certainly be happy* †.”

The transitory nature of all worldly enjoyments, is an observation as old as the creation. And the inference from it is as true as it is important, that there must be some other state of happiness for virtuous men. Relying on this truth, we have seen martyrs ascend the scaffold with composure, with chearfulness; we have beheld resignation under the most trying distresses; we have seen torture inflicted on the patient, and miseries gradually extinguishing the lamp of the righteous. In every instance the expression of the sufferer has been—
“I became dumb, and opened not my
“mouth, for it was *thy* doing.” A steady expectation of future happiness has been

* M. S. Journey to Monbard in 1785, by Herault de Se-
chelles; the work was in the press when Robespierre sent the
author to the scaffold. Edin. Mag. 1796.

† Gibbon's posthumous works.

the comfort of the virtuous in every age, and must continue the support of every one who looks upon himself as an accountable being. The good man estimates the value of eternity from the shortness of life; and knows that "our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, do work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

We naturally cling to that plank which is to save us; and what is that, amidst the waves of this troublesome world, but *the pleasing hope, the fond desire, the longing after immortality*? If we had no other assurance of it but the ardour of our own breast, surely we should spring towards the thought, and live like men who were to exist hereafter. But when a revelation presents a prospect before us, which might otherwise be thought obscure; when a prophet, yea, *more than a prophet* offers to save us by the sacrifice of himself, and gives us a taste of immortality even while we occupy these frail tenements of clay, can we withhold the sincerest tribute of gratitude and love to that Being, the author of our life, the re-
storer:

storer of our happiness? Can we forbear adopting the fervent exclamation of David — “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and
“there is none upon earth that I desire in
“comparison of thee!”

N° VIII.

Influence of a future State on Man as an accountable Creature; applying to his Fears.

Sceptic ! whoe'er thou art, who say'st the soul,
 That divine particle which God's own breath,
 Inspir'd into the mortal mass, shall rest
 Annihilate—tell—why conscience acts
 With tenfold force, when sickness, age or pain
 Stands tott'ring on the precipice of death ?

DR. GLYNN'S DAY OF JUDGMENT.

WITHOUT the solution of a future state, there are numberless events which would be totally inexplicable in this state of being. Amongst others are the pangs of conscience. A kind Providence excites in the mind of man these circumstances of horror and apprehension, that he may be checked in his career of wickedness, and, before it be too late, return to those paths which alone can make him happy. That expectation of a future world which sweetens the good man's

man's cup, dashes with gall the bowl of dissipation. In the midst of the banquet the man of pleasure perceives not the influence of any unseen cause; he endeavours to persuade himself that the *divine particle which God's own breath inspired* shall be equally dispersed with the atoms of his body, and find an eternal refuge with his sepulchral dust. But even of this persuasion he has no confidence. Reflection damps his pleasures, and brings him to some sense of those important truths, which tender parental care, or friendly instruction, had placed before his early youth. The vision of a venerable parent, or sage preceptor, may, in some interval of intemperate pleasure, reach his soul, and rescue him from destruction: or, perhaps, which is a melancholy alternative, he may still pursue his worn-out paths, till they leave him where the cup of intoxication, or the laughter of fatal friendship, can no longer serve him. Here those apprehensions which occasionally visited him, rally around his couch. As he suffered not the influence of a future state to excite *hope* within his breast, he is
tormented

tormented at a moment when he can least bear its approach, with the appearance of *fear*. If there be no God, no future day of recompence, let the sceptic tell what should excite his *fears*? What can raise such tumults in the breast of the unrighteous while tottering on the precipice of death?

Happy is it for those, who from *any* motive recover the road of obedience! Happiest, no doubt, when they are accompanied by *hope*, as they then travel under a serene sky, have few impediments to obstruct their journey, and keep their eye fixed steadily on its pleasing termination. But even those may well rejoice who reach the same end, though by a different course. Mankind are directed by various motives; and though those motives may conduct them through a valley of tears, or over mountains of difficulty, yet if they finally rest in regions of tranquillity and heavenly enjoyment, the important end will be obtained.

The love of God and the fear of punishment are the great leading motives of obedience. The former involves all the finer feelings

feelings of our nature. It raises a generous ardour in our breast ; it purifies every sentiment of our heart, and sends forth such earnest expectations, such fervent prayers to be more closely united to the almighty object of our affections, that every action of our lives is directed to complete the heavenly union. This is piety : this is happiness. The latter principle, though its object be the same, its progress is different. *Fear* operates on the human mind with much uneasiness. Even the good man often feels its force. But upon the conscience of the wicked it falls with tenfold weight. If it bring forth its proper effect, the motive will not be condemned. “ The fear of punishment and the dread
“ of the divine wrath, if it is not indeed
“ the *highest and noblest* principle of obedience, yet it is undoubtedly a very *just*
“ and *reasonable* motive to it ; if it is not
“ indeed the most *excellent* pitch of virtue,
“ yet it is at least a very *proper beginning*
“ of it ; if it is not indeed a *part* of the
“ most *exalted* love of God ; and love,
“ when it is become perfect, casteth out
fear ;

“ fear ; yet it is at least very consistent
 “ with its whole progress in *this* life, and a
 “ necessary part of that *regard* towards
 “ God, which is due to him from us as
 “ our supreme governor *.”

· If *hope* then be not near, let *fear* supply its place. Try *any* motive, sinner! to restore thee to a sense of duty ; and a God of mercy, through the intercession of a benevolent Redeemer, will accept thy endeavours.

· If the sinner did but weigh the difference between time and eternity : if he did but recollect how he trembles before the face of *man*, when temporal punishment, the correction of an hour, is awarded to him ; how serious would be his fears, when he stands before the judgment-seat of an eternal God ! “ Fear not them that kill the body,
 “ and after that have no more that they
 “ can do ; but I will forewarn you whom
 “ you shall fear ; fear him which after he
 “ hath killed hath power to cast into hell :
 “ yea, I say unto you *fear him*.”

* Dr. S. Clarke's Sermon, 1721.

It

It is the influence of a future state which generates this fear in the heart of man: for there is no man who believes, no man who but conjectures, that there *may* be such a state, who does not feel himself irresistibly impelled, at some moments, to act as if it were true. How powerful is this principle in the hour of death! and happy is the prospect when fear produces repentance! But there are melancholy instances, where fear appears with all its horrors, and yet where the voice of consolation will not be heard. “I cannot pray”—is a dreadful expression; and sincerely do I wish that I had never heard it upon a bed of sickness, *upon a bed of death*. I was once called upon to attend a person in the last stage of a disorder, merely the effects of an intemperate life. I found him sitting by the fire-side in an elbow chair, attended by two friends and a bowl of punch. I was affected at the sight. When seated by him he enquired, in a tone not well according with that of a penitent, which was the easiest way of going to heaven? I answered him, that the easiest, and only way of going

going to heaven, was by conforming to the precepts of the gospel; that our Saviour had proposed to us the measures of our obedience and of our acceptance with God; and urged such other arguments as the circumstances of his case seemed to require. I entered into conversation with him, and endeavoured to prevail upon him to acquaint me with the state of his mind, and his hopes of salvation. "When I think on these subjects," he said, "I am troubled with wicked thoughts;" and mentioned lewd songs and scenes as being, at such moments, familiar to his mind. He particularly acquainted me, that he was often tempted of the devil. I was extremely shocked at this miserable account of himself; and explained to him briefly the nature of temptation, and shewed him, from the scriptures, that a man was *then* said to be tempted, when "he was drawn away by his own lusts and enticed." The expression was applicable to his former irregularity of living. In pursuing the subject, I wished to make him as sensible of his situation as I could, and pointed out what was still in his power
to

to perform in the great business of salvation. He seemed to hear me with attention. I proposed prayer—after prayer I left him, intending to return the next evening, which was Sunday. When I stood by his bed-side the next day, he was extremely ill, appeared just upon the verge of eternity, yet—with horror I relate the sequel—he informed me with faltering voice, and almost his departing words, that he did not wish for my assistance. My breast was filled with anguish on his account. I could not forbear expressing my sorrow to behold him in so desperate a situation. He was at last prevailed upon to join in prayer—I then left him, and the next night—he died.

N° IX.

*Influence of a future State on Man as a
Member of Society.*

But none are flush'd with brighter joy, or warm
 With juster confidence, enjoy the storm,
 Than those whose pious bounties unconfin'd
 Have made them *public fathers of mankind.*

YOUNG'S LAST DAY.

THE influence of a future state, in directing the exertions of mankind to actions of great and disinterested benevolence, is so evident, that we cannot long mix with civilized society without observing it. In savage nature the wants of men are few, and those few confined to the acquisition of necessities, or the gratification of the sensual appetites. Beyond the sphere of these personal enjoyments, their care extends not, their knowledge does not reach. If, like Pope's Indian, their untutored mind proceed one step further, and "see God in clouds,
 " or

“ or hear him in the wind,” still the chief object of his attention is himself; his future wants and pleasures keep possession of his imagination; and if he expect behind *the cloud-topt hill*, a mode of existence differing from the present, *his faithful dog*, his companion and assistant in the chace, is introduced as a partaker of his *humbler heaven*.

But when a clearer revelation is presented to the christian, when “ life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel,” what is then the prospect which we behold? Are we then circumscribed in our actions, narrow in our principles, confined in our benevolence? Far, very far from it. We are impelled by a divine impulse, from one instance of public duty to another. The same good-will which we wish ourselves, we sincerely desire for our neighbour. As we become more acquainted with the impression of religion, the contagion spreads further. It flies from one enraptured breast to another. It communicates from the simple individual from whence it sprung, to the remotest region and the most distant period: or in the words of the poet,

E 2

“ A

- “ As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake ;
- “ The centre mov'd a circle strait succeeds ;
- “ Another still, and still another spreads ;
- “ Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
- “ His country next, and next all human race.”

Whether Mr. Pope's philosophy, which makes self-love the centre of universal philanthropy be just, it is not my present business to inquire. The amiable conclusion is the object at which I aim ; and the influence of a future state is, in my mind, the motive from whence all proceeds. Were there not some period, though distant, in which a man expects a recompence for all his labours, how languid would be his endeavours in promoting the welfare of his fellow-creatures ! A selfish principle is totally inconsistent with the duties which we owe to society. And indeed the principle is so totally contrary to the natural rights of man, so opposite to experience in our commerce with the world, that we cannot suppose its original to be derived from heaven. But if we imagine a *future world*, and are assured, that in that state, however distant, our actions shall be weighed in the balance of justice, allowing
for

for the imperfections of our nature, an easy solution is then given to every generous, every disinterested exertion. At this point true patriotism begins. With this prospect we have seen an Alfred reign, and a Cato expire. Under this impression the midnight lamp has often beheld the pale and anxious student, and the field of battle shouted over the falling warrior. Deeds of great and daring enterprize never would be attempted, if we considered the present sphere as the whole of our existence. What recompence could man make for a thousand dangers, which must necessarily be encountered for the public good? What remuneration for *life*, which must be hazarded on innumerable occasions? Were not the influence of this principle to diffuse itself strongly over the human breast, who would mount the breach, or scale the wall? Who would wipe the contagious brow of sickness, or ward off the impending blow from the injured and unoffending?

How noble must be that principle which produces such beneficial effects! How sublime the conception of that mind which

exerts itself, to the utmost of its ability, for the good of all mankind! Every narrow thought shrinks back into itself, and leaves the field open to disinterested virtue. Need I here mention that great and venerable character which rises far above all human excellence, and offers itself, under a variety of motives, as an object, not of imitation only, but of our profoundest adoration. Our Saviour was no hero under any of those definitions, which the world usually applies to persons of that description. And yet, no hero, however dignified in the page of history, ever rose to such an height of disinterested benevolence. As he appeared *in fashion as a man*, the motives of human conduct were in some measure to be adopted by him. It was not to redeem himself that “he suffered such contradictions of sinners;” but for those who, through him, were to obtain everlasting life. Here he displayed the most disinterested conduct; for he was, on this account, “despised and rejected of men.” “Behold and see!” he cried in the language of the prophet, “if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow—?”

“row?” Yet all these afflictions turned him not aside from the important work which he was sent into the world to perform. The scripture represents the influence of a future state, as a motive to action in Jesus Christ, as in the rest of mankind—“looking unto
“Jesus, the author and finisher of our
“faith, who, *for the joy that was set before*
“*him*, endured the cross, despising the
“shame, *and is set down at the right hand*
“*of the throne of God.*”

Here too, I might refer to his illustrious followers, the *glorious company of the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs*; who all, upon the principle of a future world, resigned every temporal comfort for the reversion of happiness hereafter. Under the christian dispensation, this heroism has been more conspicuous than under any other system. The reason is plain, because no other revelation affords such clear and unequivocal evidences of a future state.

If it be objected, that actions thus brilliant might be performed from motives of ambition, I must take leave to deny the assertion; for the wild ravages of an Alex-

ander, or a Charles XII, are as far beneath the meritorious and persevering spirit of a christian martyr, or a confessor, as the preservation and happiness of mankind differ from their destruction. The intemperate conduct of the one, betrays a phrenzy of thought, which has no other object but the gratification of unsubstantial glory: the steady and tranquil actions of the other, have in view the general good; and if fame in any shape attend their steps, it is rather to be considered as a consequence which they did not seek, than a cause which directed their conduct.

Posthumous fame is, of all other objects, the least worth a good man's search; and indeed it never enters into his train of motives. But if the greatness and utility of his attempts for the public advantage produce, in a grateful world, that degree of admiration which they deserve, it is far from repugnant to any duty which he owes either to himself or society, to reject it. He will not absorb in his own person the praises which he receives. He knows to whom
only

only they are due—to *Him* only he ascribes the glory.

It would, however, be depriving a good man of one of the most amiable traits of character, if we supposed him insensible of praise; at the same time it would be ascribing to him a degree of weakness, to imagine that he was actuated by the faint representation of future fame. It may well be allowed to the acknowledged benefactors of mankind to enjoy those sweet and comfortable sensations, which rise continually in the heart of him who is conscious of promoting extensive benefits. Well may they anticipate the estimation of unborn ages, not as adding any thing to the felicity which they will then enjoy, but gratifying their generous hearts with the pleasing hope, that there will always be found some in the list of posterity, who will not content themselves with the emptiness of praise, but will be inspired by an honest and virtuous emulation *to do likewise.*



N° X.

Influence of a future State on Man as an Individual.

A blest hereafter, then, or hop'd or gain'd,
Is all;—our *whole* of happiness. YOUNG.

AFTER having ranged through a country where we have studied the manners, and become acquainted with the improvements of its inhabitants, it is a proof of wisdom to make our observations useful to ourselves. After having considered the moral and religious characters of men as they are influenced by a belief of a future state, and seen the *general* happiness which such a belief is calculated to produce, let us turn our eyes inward, and contemplate the *individual* felicity of so blessed an expectation. The man of retired and solitary habits is he
from

from whom we look for arguments on so important a subject. Abstracted from the world, not by a misanthropic contempt of it, nor by a disgust at any thing he has met with on the scene of life, but retiring from its tumults that he may enjoy a more intimate union with his Maker, he feels the impression of future enjoyments, in the same proportion that he proceeds towards them. Having considered life under every different appearance, and having acted his part in it with all the integrity of a man, and all the piety of a christian, he is ready to be removed into those regions, where hope is swallowed up of certainty, and time gives place to eternity. A *blessed hereafter* is his firm expectation; and therefore he is neither afraid for "the terror by night," "nor for the arrow that flieth by day." His passions being subdued by his reason, and his reason being directed by religion, he enjoys all that serenity of temper, all that chearfulness of benevolence, which principles so excellent cannot but inspire.

As in ordinary life the vital functions are performed without the accurate observation

of every letter, *in speech*, or every limb, *in action*; so the influence of a future state is incorporated so intimately and imperceptibly with a good man's life, that it produces, if I may so express myself, a spontaneous happiness. Pursue a character thus impressed with a solid belief of a future world, and the sentiments which naturally flow from such an impression; follow him through the many and various mazes of his present existence, and you will find that it is not a large increase of possessions which hurries him into irregular joy, nor a small misfortune which plunges him in despair. His "hope is full of immortality." His eye is bent upon an object which possesses his *whole* soul; and has the same effect upon his breast which the sun has upon universal nature, it cheers, revives, inspirits and enlivens it. The seed, which was originally placed in it, by the hand of the heavenly husbandman, is nourished by this ray, and brings forth a plentiful harvest.

Every transaction of a good man's life, whether it be exposed to public view, or buried in the sweet tranquillity of domestic privacy;

privacy, takes its colour from this general impression of a state of being, different indeed in its nature from, but in every other respect strongly connected with, the present scene of existence. When we consider the connection, then, between this world and the next, as implied by nature, and expressed by revelation, shall we not produce this as an important argument, not of consolation only, but of pleasure and positive enjoyment, to the breast of that man whose mind is directed into so happy a channel? In material things we often behold what we cannot reach: but in spiritual and everlasting blessings, our soul anticipates what our sight cannot perceive. “ In our pursuit of the things of this world, we usually prevent enjoyment, by expectation; we anticipate our own happiness, and eat out the heart and sweetness of worldly pleasures, by delightful forethoughts of them; so that when we come to possess them, they do not answer the expectation, nor satisfy the desires which were raised about them, and they
“ vanish

“ vanish into nothing : but the things
 “ which are above are so great, so solid,
 “ so durable, so glorious, that we cannot
 “ raise our thoughts to an equal height
 “ with them ; we cannot enlarge our de-
 “ sires beyond a possibility of satisfaction.
 “ Our hearts are greater than the world ;
 “ but God is greater than our hearts, and
 “ the happiness which he hath laid up for
 “ us, is like himself, incomprehensibly great
 “ and glorious *.”

It is thus that the good man possesses,
 within his own breast, a degree of happiness
 which can arise only from such heavenly
 contemplations. In him is the poetical
 image fully realized, with his foot resting
 on the earth, his head reacheth above the
 clouds †. The glory to come mixes itself
 with his present satisfactions, alleviates
 every sorrow, and increases every comfort.

But even the good man cannot long be a
 partaker of sublunary enjoyments, without

* Tillotson, Sermon 193.

† Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit.

VIRG.

finding

finding those enjoyments interrupted by some painful though expected cause. The separation of friends by death, cannot but give a pang to those hearts, which were once firmly united by affection. But the religious man, though he feels the stroke sharper than *the shorn lamb*, possesses a cordial of no common strength. He sees the sign of the Son of man in heaven—he hears a voice, “ Behold ! I bring you glad tidings.” And the same principle of faith by which he expects to behold his Saviour on the throne of his glory, and the twelve apostles on seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel, leads him to exult in the expectation, that the bond of friendship and affection, which has been broken by death, will be re-united when he comes to the “ city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Let it not be thought that there is too much of terrestrial enjoyment in this expectation.

tation. The passions and affections of men were not given us for a trivial purpose. It is well understood that nothing earthly can find a place in that spiritual state of existence. But there is so strong an analogy between the heavenly dispositions which the gospel recommends to us here, and those which angels and the spirits of good men will exercise themselves in hereafter, that we cannot but imagine, that those who have excited in us such qualities of goodness and benevolence, will be partakers with us in the full perfection of them in a better world. Faith and hope will be then no more, because the hour of certainty is come; but charity, which comprehends every amiable feeling, will enter with us into heaven, and no doubt constitute no small part of our happiness. “Now,” says St. Paul, “we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known.”—*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me—where I am there shall my servant be*—are the foundations of
an.

an argument which inspires the mourner with consolation, and affords a pious confidence which is not to be shaken by metaphysical reasonings. The resurrection of the *same body* implies an *identity of person*. Such a consciousness of a pre-existent state must bring to our remembrance the *things done in the body*; and as this consciousness must extend to every person risen from the dead, there is more than reason to convince us, that virtuous friends will meet again in happiness. Our earthly desires indeed will be extinguished; we “shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;” our *vile body*, that is, the body of our humiliation, shall be changed, that it may be fashioned like unto the glorified body of Christ*. The instincts of life must cease with it; but the spiritual and better part of every virtuous connection will continue for ever. Every relative affection will be renewed with ardour. The cord between married friends will be drawn still closer; their affections will be purer, their delights more

* Phil. iii. 21.

exquisite;

exquisite; for they will be, as the text expresses it, *as the angels of God in heaven**.

There is one objection which it may be necessary to obviate, as it may be thought to derogate from the *individual happiness* of men, when reflecting on this argument as a source of consolation; namely, that they may not meet in the next world with *some* friends which they have had in this. But they must remember, that such will not have been *virtuous* friends, and therefore not entitled, according to the gospel dispensation, to the rewards of heaven. It will be no diminution of our happiness,

- * When the dread trumpet sounds, the slumb'ring dust .
 Not unattentive to the call, shall wake ;
 And ev'ry joint possess its proper place,
 With a new elegance of form, unknown
 To its first state. Nor shall the conscious soul
 Mistake his partner ; but amidst the crowd
 Singling its other half, into its arms
 Shall rush, with all th' impatience of a man
 That's new come home, who having long been absent,
 With haste runs over ev'ry diff'rent room
 In pain to see the whole. Thrice happy meeting !
 Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more.

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

because

because we shall then wholly acquiesce in the *justice* of God. The veil of passion and prejudice will be removed from our sight ; for in that world, where all will be harmony, no disturbed reflections can arise.

Nº XI.

On the Authenticity of the Scriptures.

The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away ;
But fix'd his word.—

POPE'S MESSIAH.

As a belief in a future state is essentially necessary to the happiness of man, it is of infinite importance, that the authenticity of those writings which deliver this truth, should be established on the firmest foundation. And blessed be God ! evidence of the most conclusive nature is every where to be found. The deplorable scepticism of the present age has produced writers of the first abilities, who have arranged every argument on this subject in the most perspicuous point of view. A modern of much eminence has received, on this account, the
praise

praise which he deserves *. May his pious labours be productive of good fruit ! May the scripture which he so ably elucidates, and whose authority he vindicates with so powerful a pen, be “ received, not as the “ word of man, but (as it is in truth) the “ word of God, which effectually worketh “ in them that believe.”

The study of nature, considered abstractedly, however it might have raised the mind of man a few degrees above brutality, never would have arrived at the knowledge of those sublime truths which result from revelation. A thousand instances may be produced to prove it. A stronger perhaps we cannot give, than that of the modern Chinese, as represented in the authentic history of the late embassy †. Ingenious in some mechanic arts, which could not but be the case from the extreme population of the country, and the continually occurring wants of the inhabitants ; expert, from the same cause, in the prosecution of trade

* Paley's Evidences of Christianity.

† Sir Geo. Staunton's account of Earl Macartney's Voyage to China.

and

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and commerce—what is the real state of their minds? “Darkness, as in the days of old, hath covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” Desirous, they appear to be, of instruction; and from the public degrees of honour which they confer, and from the annual examination of their youth, we might have expected correspondent advantages. But centuries have rolled on after centuries, and still they remain immersed in the same idolatries, still the slaves of the most inveterate prejudices. The high degree of national pride which they possess, and jealousy of every surrounding, and even of every distant country, offer an impenetrable barrier against the introduction of useful knowledge. A few christians, small indeed in number compared with the bulk of the inhabitants*, are to be found among the refuse of the people, and even these are clogged with superstitious ceremonies and mortifying corruptions. It is impossible for the human eye to search out the secrets of Providence. To the

* About 200,000. See Sir Geo. Staunton's Account, &c.

Almighty

Almighty Ruler of the universe, let us, with all humility of mind, leave the direction of his own works. In his own time he will collect his flock, and feed them in green pastures. It is our duty to improve the knowledge which we possess; and if the scriptures, which are shut to others, be open to us, it will be our fault, it will be our condemnation if we do not use them as we ought.

The history of christianity is supported by a greater weight of evidence than any other ancient history. And no wonder; for the truths which it inculcates have been reckoned among the most important interests of mankind. It is beyond my purpose to recount all the arguments which learned men have produced, in support of the authenticity of the scriptures. They are of various kinds, and derived from sources remote from each other. The partiality of friends, and even the hostile attacks of enemies, have contributed to establish their authority. In the early history of the christian church, we are told of apologies written, and addressed to heathen emperors,
in

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in which those doctrines were recited, and even *those expressions used*, which were to be found in the acknowledged and avowed productions of the first disciples of Jesus Christ. In almost every age important controversies were carried on, in which the combatants on *both sides* appealed to the ancient texts of scriptures: texts, which still form a part of the sacred canon which is in use among ourselves. In a few instances, perhaps, this might occasion variations in the copies which were delivered down to posterity. But it is singular, (and a miraculous interposition of Providence it is, in attestation of the truth of holy writ) that however any particular passage may have been corrupted by error or design, every important doctrine, every interesting precept remains in the full vigour of its primitive youth. If an heretical intention altered in any instance one copy, many others remained to detect the alteration.

Can we desire a more *direct* evidence, that these are the very writings which the apostles delivered, for which they suffered, and by the means of which christianity was established

established in the world! *Indirect*, or *auxiliary* evidence may be produced from a comparison of the different books, or portions of scripture, with one another. And this, so far as relates to the epistles of St. Paul, has been performed in the most satisfactory manner, by the author I have referred to in the beginning of this meditation, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*; a book calculated to make a striking impression on the mind of the sceptic. “Undesigned coincidences,” he says, “must have truth for their foundation*.” He pursues this argument through St. Paul’s thirteen epistles, which he compares with the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, and affirms, that “the simple perusal of the writings is sufficient to prove that neither the history is taken from the letters, nor the letters from the history.”

It is plain to any one who meditates on the sacred scriptures (and it is every one’s duty to do so) that they cannot be considered as an heterogeneous collection of

* Paley’s Evidences, Vol. II. p. 195.

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writings unconnected with each other, and not tending to the same end. On the contrary, it is their united force which arrests the mind, their collected strength which overpowers and convinces the understanding. Like different rays of light descending from the sun, each has its peculiar brilliancy and beauty, but when drawn into one point, the effect is irresistible. “ He “ who is instructed in the divine music (says an ancient father of the church *) “ knows that all the scripture is a well- “ tuned instrument of God’s, which sends “ forth to those who are desirous to learn “ it, one harmonious and salutary voice, “ though composed of different sounds.” Harmony indeed prevails, and of the most melodious kind, in every part of scripture. Though many authors were concerned in its composition ; though it was written at different periods, and in different places ; yet as they were all influenced by the same spirit, it is in every respect incapable of contradiction. “ All these worketh that

* Origen Phil. c. 6. Welchman on the 39 Articles.

“ self-

“self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” Different interpretations of scripture indeed have arisen, and the christian world has been separated into sects, as the wavering opinions of men have directed them. But *all* have acknowledged the authenticity of the scriptures. It is not for man to dive into the depths of opinion, or to say, why have these things been? It is enough for us to know that on this rock Christ hath built his church; and however we may behold it assaulted by the winds of heaven, or by the turbulence of a boisterous sea, it will resist the utmost efforts of the tempest, till that day dawn which will gather together in one the flocks which are now scattered abroad.

Perhaps in no instance is the providence of God more conspicuous than in the protection which it has given, through a succession of ages, to the books emphatically called *the scriptures*. The histories of most ancient kingdoms have perished with the political existence of those societies whose actions they recorded. It is in vain that we search after authentic materials of the

first establishment of any people. Their laws, their manners, their governments are no more, their very ruins are dispersed, and we can hardly say, such things have been. But the records of holy scripture are faithful to their trust. It is wonderful to contemplate the series of events which they relate. We are placed upon a point, from whence we behold the formation of this terrestrial globe. We see the gradual development of a world, the arrangement of rude and undigested matter, the creation of man. We trace also the history of the human soul; we see it depressed by disobedience in the garden of Eden, and in the subsequent conduct of the descendants of Adam; we see it restored to primitive purity, and promised immortal happiness by the meritorious sufferings of an incarnate God. Could any thing but a Being of superior intelligence have revealed to us such a tale of wonders? Could any thing but such a Being have preserved for our use and benefit, through so many thousand years, records of such infinite importance to the human race? Let us be grateful for this invaluable legacy.

Without

Without the revelation of such knowledge, in some way commensurate to the faculties, and capable of instructing mankind; we should still have wandered in the most lamentable obscurity.

But what shall we say to those who wrest these sacred writings *to their own destruction?* who pervert their meanings to the very worst purposes, and deny the advantages which even *they* receive? Let us leave them to the mercy of God, who affords to all men an opportunity of repentance. The charity of the gospel requires this prayer for them. May their prejudices be removed by a strenuous exertion of their reason! and may the same spirit which dictated the words of scripture, take possession of their hearts, and lead them into all *the* truth.

N° XII.

Evidences that Jesus came from God.

Lo! earth receives him from the bending skies!
Sink down, ye mountains, and ye valleys, rise!
With heads declin'd, ye cedars, homage pay:
Be smooth, ye rocks, ye rapid floods, give way!
The Saviour comes!—

POPE'S MESSIAH.

THAT the evidences of christianity may be familiar to the eye, and impress themselves on the understanding at every turn, I shall not hesitate to recite such arguments on this subject as offer themselves to my mind, however trite or common they may be to the reflecting christian. It is of importance to the world, to ascertain the truth of the christian revelation; and never was it of more importance than in these *latter days*, when whole nations, not only appear willing to break down the strong holds

holds of religion, but have, in many places, erected a triumphant banner upon her ruins.

1. That Jesus came from God may be proved by his possessing the gift of prophecy; since no one can foretell future events unless he be influenced by the spirit of an all-seeing God. The instances in which he displayed this power are these: He foretold the treachery of Judas; the denial of Peter; his own crucifixion; his resurrection from the dead on the third day; the descent of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples; the wonderful propagation of the gospel throughout the world; the rise of heresies; the dreadful persecution of his servants; the destruction of Jerusalem, &c. However some of these might be ascribed by the unbeliever to an intuitive knowledge of human nature, and a greater portion of that faculty which we call *foresight*, others could not possibly fall under that description. Had his disciples been possessed of more penetration than they were (and on the contrary it is certain that they were for the most part ignorant and unlearned men)

F 4

men) they never would have ventured the truth of the religion, that they were endeavouring to establish, on the uncertainty of prophecies, which a few years, nay a few days, would develope. The propagation of the gospel was an event which they could believe only on the word of him who had foretold it: and the destruction of their then flourishing metropolis was as far from the expectation of the Jews, or even of the Romans, who were the immediate authors of the calamity, as any event, yet in the womb of time, could be. But besides this general observation, if we consider the particular circumstances which attended the accomplishment of these prophecies, *and which could not possibly be foreseen*, we cannot but adopt this argument as one infallible proof of the truth of christianity. Of these minute circumstances I must restrain myself to a few; and these, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem; namely, the earthquakes in divers places; the great signs and fearful sights; the safety of Christ's faithful servants who removed from the city before the siege, relying on the faith

faith of this prophecy; the false christs and false prophets who should appear; the entire overthrow of the temple; the order of Titus to dig up the city; the immense slaughter of the Jews;—all these circumstances, however appearing to arise from the momentary impulse of the conqueror, or the actions of the day, which our Lord foretold about forty years before they happened, and which are proved to have been publickly inculcated both among Jews and Christians, were distinctly and accurately fulfilled.

2. That Jesus came from God may be proved from the accomplishment of all the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, *in his person.* To the Old Testament I must refer for these prophecies; to the New Testament for their accomplishment. An attentive comparison must produce a conclusion favourable to christianity: for, to no other person since the world began, can they with equal, or any, propriety be applied. It was this argument which made so strong an impression, even to conviction, on the sceptical and dissipated Earl of
r 5 Rochester;

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Rochester* ; for in all history he could find no one *but Jesus Christ*, with whose character the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah could agree. There can be no deception here, as every prophecy relating to Christ was written, and promulged, in different ages, long before his appearance in the world. , The Jews, though their blindness prevents them from beholding *in Christ* the promised Messiah, have always been severe guardians of their own scriptures ; of course, the objection is futile, which ascribes to the followers of our Lord, the forgery of these prophecies. The dispersion of the Jews throughout the world, a dispersion particularly foretold by their own prophets, has preserved them entire and uncorrupted, and is in itself one of the strongest confirmations of the truth of revelation. The Jews, even at this day, acknowledge, that the Old Testament which we believe in, is the same which has been delivered down from age to age among

* Burnet's Life of John Wilmot, Earl of R. and Gilpin's Moral Contrasts.

them-

themselves. Is it likely, is it possible, that Jews and Christians should unite in forging those books which pass under this name? If any one can imagine this, no argument of reason can be expected to make any impression upon him.

3. That Jesus came from God is manifest from the miracles which he wrought. To enter into the full discussion concerning miracles is not my intention. If the truth of the New Testament be proved, the miracles of our Saviour will be believed: and on the other hand, if we believe these miracles, which we cannot but do if there be any faith in history, we cannot dispute his authority. Even the earliest enemies of Christ did not deny the miraculous exertions of his power: though they absurdly ascribed them to the influence of evil spirits. But it could not possibly be supposed, that an *evil* spirit should support such doctrines as Jesus taught. "If Satan
" cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom
" stand?"—We are reduced to this alternative, either to admit, with Nicodemus, that "no man could do the things which

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“ Christ did, except God were with him ;” or to imagine that the Almighty, by allowing such miracles to be performed in his name, should give his sanction to a lye—an impious and improbable conclusion !

4. That Jesus came from God is evident from the innocency and integrity of his life, and the excellency of his doctrines. It is amazing that mankind, who cannot but be sensible of the infirmities of their nature, and the imperfections of their lives, should not look with rapturous delight on the unspotted character of Christ ! Do they not see something *above humanity* in every occurrence in which he was engaged, *an emanation of divinity* in the whole tenour of his conduct ? However the religion of Christ has been disputed, no man has presumed to arraign the innocency of his life. Is it then to be believed, that he who was confessedly free from sin, who employed every moment in doing good to the bodies and souls of men, and at last, in conformity to his doctrines, died to promote their salvation, should falsely pretend that he had a commission from heaven ? Above all, can we imagine

Jesus to be an impostor, who delivered to mankind a system of morals and belief superior in purity and wisdom to that of the most celebrated philosophers and legislators of ancient and modern times? That his birth was obscure and his education mean, are circumstances which add to the importance of the argument; for how could so humble, so illiterate a person as Jesus have introduced, have propagated so widely, a religion which was to supersede all others, even that of the Jews in the midst of whom he preached, unless he had received powers from him "who turneth the hearts of all men as the rivers of waters?"

5. The wonderful propagation of the gospel is another proof that Jesus came from God. It has been the fashion of this day to impute the propagation of the gospel to natural causes; but surely he who considers the argument referred to in the last paragraph, will hesitate in subscribing to the sentiments of an historian whose elegant and imposing language has been as much admired, as his sceptical insinuations are to be

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be dreaded *. Let the unprejudiced but reflect, what success was to be expected from the apparent son of a carpenter, uneducated and unsupported, preaching a new religion, in the midst of a people peculiarly biassed in favour of their own established opinions ; and he will not think that ordinary means were likely to produce so important an effect. Let him reflect on Jesus, foretelling that “ the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world ;” and again, that “ if he should be lifted up from the earth, he will draw *all men* unto him ;” let him reflect that these improbable predictions (as they might seem) have been fulfilled, and are fulfilling, in the most wonderful manner ; and that he who is *now* addressed as an inhabitant of a country formerly barbarous, but at present abounding with christian virtue and christian exertions, is an instance of the very circumstance which the sceptic affects to doubt ; and he will acknowledge that this is one of the

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, particularly his 13th and 14th chapters.

strongest arguments in favour of the religion which he professes.

However prominent these evidences, which I have recited, may be, they are confirmed by many others of equal strength and equal importance. To destroy, is always more easy than to build up. In ordinary things the observation may be true; but in establishing the truth of christianity we are supported by the infallible word of God. To punish the sins of men, God may permit the evil of infidelity to prevail in the world, but the triumph of the gospel *must* succeed. Let this cheer the dejected hearts of good men in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words," says Christ, "shall not pass away."



N° XIII.

*Concurring Evidences for the Truth of
Christianity.*

All are but parts of one stupendous whole.

POPE.

As he, who from the dimness of his sight, or the nature of his situation, observes only parts of a large and beautiful building, can have but a faint conception of its real elegance and dimensions; so he whose mind rests only on a few of the evidences of revelation, however powerful they may be in contributing to establish its important truths, wants that irresistible conviction which arises from a contemplation of the *whole*. We see many a *feeble critic* ready to seize upon, what may be called, the outposts of christianity, whose heart is too much prejudiced to attend to all the comprehensive arguments which the subject affords. There are circumstances recorded in the Bible, which,

which, in every age, have met with some sceptic to turn them into ridicule, because they happen to be contrary to the general experience of mankind. They reflect not that in estimating a *divine* revelation, the power of the Almighty Governor of the universe should be more regarded, than any fanciful opinion, any rule, however specious, directed by the fallibility of human judgment.

Had there been only one miracle or one prophecy on which the fabrick of revelation could be built, objections might have arisen, which would have shook the building to its foundation. Deception might have been thought to have produced the one, and accident the other. But when we behold a chain of miracles from the earliest times which history records; when a series of prophecies is presented to us, all tending to the same end, and meeting their accomplishments at different periods, do we not feel ourselves affected by a weight of evidence, which perhaps no single circumstance could have produced? “All the prophecies and miracles, howsoever remote,
“ are

“ are by their unity of design drawn together and formed into one regular *whole*,
“ growing stronger and being mutually
“ supported by the association. As the
“ strength of the parts in a well constructed
“ arch is the result, not of their own solidity alone, but of their uniform direction
“ to one common centre.”

The more this argument is considered, the greater conviction it will afford. It corresponds with the magnificence of the idea excited by the great scheme of christianity; which comprehends within its plan every scriptural event from the fall of Adam to the present hour; nay, it ranges into the very depths of time, and anticipates the completion of many important prophecies. By the appearance of Christ, a dark and impenetrable veil was removed from the Jewish history. It became then evident; for what intent many of their rites and ceremonies were instituted; the importance of sacrifice and offerings was acknowledged, and a clear light shined on their hearts. When future times shall still more develope the great purposes of Providence, as revealed
in

in the scriptures of truth, the human mind will receive a yet greater accession of evidence, and be satisfied that it was not for one age, or one people, that Christ, our *day-star*, beamed on the world.

If we consider the series of predictions in the Old Testament concerning the coming of Christ, from the promise made to Adam, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, to the prophecy of Malachi, about four hundred years before that event, we must be sensible that no man, or succession of men, however distinguished by knowledge or abilities, or even by the most penetrating foresight, could produce so regular and well-concerted a plan, without an assistance far superior to their own. "Can such a scheme," to adopt the words of an elegant writer, from whose treatise I have selected my last quotation, and to whom I shall be obliged for the following observations * : "Can such a scheme be merely an

* "A Sketch of the one great Argument, formed from the several concurring Evidences for the Truth of Christianity. By the Rev. John Rotherham, M. A. of Codrington College, in Barbadoes. Oxford, 1754." [Late Rector of Houghton le Spring.]

"invention

“ invention of the historians concerned in
 “ recording it? No; there is an uniformity
 “ runs through it, which will never suffer
 “ us to think it the casual production of
 “ a number of men, so remote in their
 “ ages, divided in their interests, and dis-
 “ tinguished in their geniuses. For did
 “ these men, utter strangers to any general
 “ design, each of them direct his fortuitous
 “ labours on his own detached part so ex-
 “ actly according to rule and measure, that
 “ out of all these parts accidentally put
 “ together, there arose as out of a chaos,
 “ one harmonious and well proportioned
 “ whole? No reasonable inquirer can ac-
 “ quiesce in so absurd a solution; because
 “ it supposes chance to be the parent of
 “ final causes; and to act, under different
 “ circumstances, with a view to one deter-
 “ minate end.”

Under this consideration “ what acces-
 “ sion of strength will now be made to the
 “ credit of the historians? For here will be
 “ now a number of historians mutually
 “ supporting each other; historians of dif-
 “ ferent ages, different countries, different
 “ com-

“ complexions, abilities, educations, per-
“ suasions, interests ; different in all other
“ parts of their character ; yet, as histo-
“ rians, perfectly consistent. Now, what
“ one motive can possibly be thought of,
“ if we set aside the conviction of truth,
“ that might have this uniform influence
“ on writers so various ? It could not be
“ any ingredient in their constitution, for
“ here are the sanguine and the phlegmatic,
“ the active and the contemplative, the
“ warm and the sedate, some who enjoyed
“ all the fire of imagination, and others
“ who possessed all the coolness of judg-
“ ment. It could not be any similarity of
“ education, any prepossession of senti-
“ ments, or adherence to favourite prin-
“ ciples, nor, lastly, any union of interests :
“ for here were the ignorant and the
“ learned, those of simple unadorned minds,
“ and those who had been enriched and
“ refined with all the advantages of culture
“ and instruction : some trained up in all
“ the affluence and splendor of a court,
“ some who hardly aspired above the hu-
“ mility of a cottage : here were the suc-
cessful

“ cessful and the unfortunate, the martial
 “ and the timorous, the monarch and the
 “ mechanic ; in short, here were men en-
 “ gaged in the most discordant scenes of
 “ life. Now when we see a plan so far
 “ beyond the compass of human genius to
 “ comprehend, described by the joint assist-
 “ ance of men in every circumstance so
 “ distinguished, and this executed with the
 “ same consistency and uniformity as if it
 “ had been the regular work of some great
 “ and single genius ; what can we conclude,
 “ but that the spirit of divine wisdom pre-
 “ sided over the whole work, assigning each
 “ his part, and so conducting him through
 “ it that this universal harmony might still
 “ be preserved ?”

“ That power and wisdom,” adds the
 same author, “ which could preserve con-
 “ sistence through such a series of facts
 “ must not have been short-lived, transient,
 “ or interrupted, but must have continued
 “ in action from the beginning to the end
 “ of the series : and because towards the
 “ end is placed a great event, to which every
 “ preceding part has a manifest relation,
 “ that

“ that wisdom must also from the very
“ original have had a clear view and per-
“ fect assurance of its completion. But
“ these are characters of wisdom and power
“ applicable alone to the divine. For that
“ wisdom which could guide a progression
“ of facts through so immense a space of
“ time with an uniform direction to one
“ determinate end, could be no other than
“ the wisdom which foresees, all future
“ events; and that power which could
“ guard it through all interfering and op-
“ posing occurrences, turning aside every
“ contrary force, which might have weaken-
“ ed or destroyed its tendency to the des-
“ tined end, could be no other than the
“ power which gives motion to, and with-
“ draws it from, every dependent being.”

The argument, so ably supported in these extracts, might be extended with good effect to the several writers of the New Testament. The same wisdom and power is visible in them all. They all record the same event, they all draw the same important inference from it. No discordant opinions are found amongst them, whatever may be discovered amongst

amongst their commentators. So ardent is the zeal of St. Paul, that the unity, if I may so call it, of the gospel should not be interrupted, that he exclaims, "though we" or an angel from heaven preach any other "gospel, than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." In support of this observation, the apostle endeavours to establish the truth of his preaching, by assuring his Galatian converts, that his doctrines, though the same with those of other preachers of the gospel, were received by immediate inspiration, and not by consultation. His early adoption of the prejudices of his nation, and his violent persecution of the professors of christianity, rendered it unlikely that he should have listened to their persuasions. As soon as it pleased God, by his grace, to call him to be his disciple, "immediately," he says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood;" he sought not the company of believers, but *independently* preached the gospel which he had so miraculously received.

This surely must be considered as an additional proof of the truth of christianity.

Had

Had it been false, writers of such various descriptions must have differed from each other. As then there is but *one Lord, one faith, one baptism*, let us be directed by one rule of conduct, *one hope of our calling*.

N° XIV.

On the inward Evidence of the Gospel.

— From heaven

He to his own a comforter will send
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
His spirit within them, and the law of faith,
Working thro' love, upon their hearts shall write,
To guide them in all truth.—

MILTON.

HOWEVER the learned or the wise may satisfy themselves with reasoning on the truth of divine revelation, it is certain that neither the deductions of the one, nor the arguments of the other, can make any impression on those ignorant and uninstructed minds which form the great mass of mankind: for “how can they believe in him “of whom they have not heard?” Or what advantage will it be to them *to hear*, if they do not understand? It is likely then that

that Divine Providence would find out some other method of instruction, equal to the wants, equal to the abilities of every man. I would not infer that there is one kind of evidence adapted to the wise, and another to the ignorant. Far from it; for all have *one faith, one hope*; “all eat the same spiritual meat, all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drink of the spiritual rock which follows them, and that rock is Christ.”

Though God has been pleased in constituting the world to make several outward distinctions amongst men, and endow them with different degrees of knowledge, yet true wisdom is within the reach of all. And unless even the wise men of this world seek for the evidence of heavenly things in the manner prescribed by the gospel, and with that humility of mind, to which alone *grace* is promised, they will wander in a wilderness out of which they can find no way, they will stumble upon dark mountains, and lose themselves in the labyrinth of error. Too often have we seen this conduct. The writings of infidels have met

with the completest confutations. But with what effect? With the conversion of the writers? Alas! few are the instances where that has been the case. Wrapt up in the pride of knowledge, they disdain the only method recommended by the gospel, and refuse the operations of the divine Spirit, which alone can lead them into all the truth.

Allowing the *outward* testimony to the truth of christianity, all the confidence which it merits (and important indeed are the conclusions which are drawn from this source) still it will be unproductive of good fruits, if we rely not on the *inward* evidence so strongly inculcated in the preaching of all the primitive apostles. "Christ sent me not," says St. Paul, "to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with *wisdom of words*, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect," that is, not with that parade of learning which you so much esteem, but with the inward dictates and demonstration of the spirit; "for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish (*the worldly wise*) foolishness; but
to

to us who are saved (*in consequence of our belief*) it is the power of God."

At the first promulgation of the gospel, and for several years afterwards, it was not to the *written* word that the first preachers appealed. For, as the writer of an excellent treatise on this subject observes*,
" During sixty, seventy, or perhaps nearly
" a hundred years, christianity flourished
" without the assistance of any written
" gospel †. This must have been by the
" *spirit's immediate* influence. It does not
" appear, that when the apostolical epistles
" were written, any of the gospels which
" we now have, were extant or known.
" They are not mentioned in the epistles,
" nor is there any allusion to them. Yet
" it is clear, from the epistles, that there
" were large churches, or societies of chris-

* Knox's Christian Philosophy : or an Attempt to display, by internal Testimony, the Wisdom and Excellence of the Christian Religion, p. 534.

† Whatever dates may be assigned to the writings of the Gospels, the argument is not here affected by it, as it will be universally allowed, that there was a period, when the Gospel was preached, before the works of the Evangelists were delivered in writing.

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“ tians, without a written gospel, except
“ that which was written on the heart of
“ the humble believer by the spirit’s minis-
“ tration.” Whilst the first apostles preach-
ed, indeed, the Holy Ghost vouchsafed, by
a visible effect, to announce his presence;
but after the apostolic age, the same appear-
ances were not necessary. Other evidences
were produced, and amongst these, the or-
dinary effusions of the same spirit.

It is not my intention, to enter into a
discussion on the nature and manner of the
spirit’s operations. Peruse the scriptures.
Every page of the epistles considers the in-
fluence of the spirit, as the first motive of
belief, the first incitement to religious virtua.
A reflection on this part of revelation, at
once evinces the superiority of the christian
system to that of every other declaration of
morality. Here we have an impulse, strong
and powerful; not indeed contrary to our
reason, but above every human expecta-
tion. The extraordinary gifts of the com-
forter, it is true, have ceased: but examine
the interior of the good man, and you will
see reason to suppose that the apostle’s ob-
servation

servation still remains in force—" as many
" as are led by the spirit of God, they are
" the sons of God."

That this is the great test by which the
evidence of christianity should be tried, is
manifest from the answer of our Lord him-
self to the Jews, who were astonished at
the wisdom which he displayed, considering
the slender means which they knew he had
enjoyed, of information. " How knoweth

" this man letters having never learned?

" Jesus answered them and said, My doc-

" trine is not mine, but his that sent me:

" If any man will do his will, he shall

" know of the doctrine whether it be of

" God, or whether I speak of myself."

Let the convert but *do his will*, and he will
ask for, he will want, no further evidence
of the truth of his profession. Internal
conviction will follow his obedience; he
will know the doctrines to be derived from
heaven, and he will find this faith to be the
mean; the only mean, of carrying himself
thither.

Examples will not be wanting to prove
the benefit of this preventing grace. The

apostles who went down to Emmaus, no doubt, were well acquainted with the Jewish scriptures; yet it was not till *the Lord opened their understandings*, that they were able to comprehend the most important passages relating to himself. The Lord, too, we are told in the Acts, “*opened the heart of Lydia*, that she attended to the “*preaching of Paul.*” And the Lord, in every age, and in every corner of the world, will *open the heart* of the sincere believer; and make him *wise unto salvation.* “*Lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*”

All the doctrines of the christian religion have a natural tendency to reform the manners and regulate the passions of mankind. They develope a scheme of salvation which cannot be equalled by the utmost stretch of human imagination. They proclaim a God, the parent and benevolent promoter of the happiness of man. They offer to us a Saviour, who was at once a sacrifice for sin, and an ensample of godly life. They lead us to the knowledge of an holy and essential Spirit, whose divine influence invigorates the

the cause of christianity, illuminates the understanding of the faithful, and disposes them to “receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls.”

It cannot be supposed that such an arrangement of divine wisdom could ever have been the invention of man. And when the practice of religious virtue is added to religious belief, we may be said, in the apostle’s language, to have *the witness in ourselves*: “the spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

When we consider the evidences of christianity in this light, we shall not wonder that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” Truth lies within an humble breast, and reposes safely in a contrite spirit.

In this consists the difference between external and internal testimony. The principles of reason in both cases are exerted with good effect. They arrive at the desired point by different roads. But here is the danger. In the former instance, the understanding

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derstanding is convinced without influencing the will; the inclinations are drawn aside by the allurements of the world; and the whole cause is lost in the moment of victory. In the latter, the same affections which promoted the habit of goodness, preserve the will from falling a sacrifice to perverted knowledge. The will, being thus confirmed by the practice of every christian grace, reflects with double lustre every beam which it has received from the understanding. The evidence of the truth of christianity becomes considerably stronger, in proportion to the conviction that her doctrines come from God. The believer of external evidence *may*, through the divine blessing, find the path which leadeth unto life; the believer of *internal* evidence, according to the promise of the Father, if he place himself under the direction of the Spirit of truth, *must*, (in all humility be it said,) experience that degree of certainty, which is the fruit of righteousness. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried," says Daniel, "but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall under-

“ understand, but the wise shall understand.”

I am aware how frequently this doctrine has led to enthusiastic rapture and fanatical devotion. But this observation implies no censure on the profession of the doctrine itself. That is the doctrine of scripture; it is the doctrine of the church. But neither scripture, nor the interpretation of scripture by the church, countenances extravagance of conduct. Though founded on proper principles, on such occasions the mind deviates into error. It mistakes the *feelings* of the man, for the ordinary, but imperceptible influences of the spirit. “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth : so is every one who is born of the spirit.—The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality (without wrangling or contentions) and without hypocrisy.”

In discussing the superior importance of inward evidence I would not be thought to discourage the researches of the learned in developing the outward testimonies of the gospel. In a polished age it may be necessary to respect even the prejudices of the scholar: it may be necessary also sometimes to use the scholar's argument in replying to a lettered infidel. But the scholar himself must be satisfied how defective the acutest logic would be in converting an uninstructed Indian, or an unlettered native of Otaheite. Nay, he will be certain, that however his own *understanding* may be convinced by arguments of human reason, he will find his *heart* unaffected, till he be made sensible of the benefit of a divine Teacher. It is *he*, and *he alone*, who performs the duties of his religion, that possesses an effectual evidence within his own breast, and can distinguish the doctrines of the gospel to be the doctrines of God.

N° XV.

On the Necessity and Duty of Baptism.

——— To his great baptism flock'd
With awe, the regions round.———

MILTON.

TO connect ourselves with that society which offers such great and precious promises to the world as that of the christian institution, must be the great object, the great delight of every person whose heart is improved by contemplation. It is impossible to peruse the early history of christianity, without perceiving that an act of introduction was considered as indispensably necessary to all those who were to be admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion. Immersion, or sprinkling with water, was that act of admission which our Saviour adopted, in imitation of a similar ceremony, by which proselytes were admitted to all the privileges of
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of the Jewish church. Indeed it appears to have been a well-known practice in our Saviour's time; for the Pharisees express no wonder when they behold John baptizing with water, as they certainly would have done had it been an unusual ceremony; but simply question his authority—"why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ?"

An enumeration of passages to prove the necessity of baptism is needless; for every one in the primitive church who received the gospel, submitted to this ceremony, nay, *flocked* for this important purpose, *from all the regions round*. With few exceptions this mode of introduction has been practised in a succession of ages by almost every description of christians. Though at some periods a discussion has arisen between the baptism of infants and of adults, still the great necessity of it was admitted by the disputants on every side: and if it were not for the progress of scepticism on the one hand, by which the present age is justly stigmatized, and for the lukewarmness of our own professors on the other, I should not

not have thought it necessary at this time to have adopted this subject of meditation.

How few, alas ! even of those who bring children to the font, *flock with awe to this great baptism !* They consider it as a family festival—a festival indeed it is, but not of dissipation. The essence of the ceremony is too frequently lost in its formality. I know not a more pathetic incident than the baptism of an infant. A human being, with its eye just opening on the world, presented, free from actual guilt, before that God who created it ; dedicated to that Saviour, without whose benevolence it had better never been born ; receiving, in so solemn a manner, the effusion of that Spirit which is to direct its future steps, through many a turbulent and uneasy scene, offers to the mind a more affecting combination of circumstances than any other event of human life. At death the race is run ; hope and apprehension are equally extinct. But those who know the world, are satisfied what severe difficulties and trials the yet harmless infant must necessarily encounter. Let the parent,

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standing

standing by the *profluent stream* *, use that awful moment of prayer for his innocent babe ; let the prospect improve himself, for except we become *as little children*, we cannot be received into the kingdom of heaven. In allusion to these circumstances under the Jewish dispensation, how impressive was the offering of the mother !—a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons !

When we enroll ourselves in any earthly association, some outward visible sign of attachment is reasonably expected. And shall we be less forward in giving an outward pledge of affection to that Saviour under whose banner it is our truest interest to inlist, than in joining ourselves to a society, where the benefit, however great, is only transient ? So forcible did this argument appear to the first writers of the christian church, that they applied to the two indispensable ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, the same term which the Roman soldiers used in offering their oath of allegiance and fidelity to their

• Milton.

general.

general *. In this sense baptism may truly be called a *sacrament*, and assurance of faithful attachment; and as it is made our introduction to all the great advantages promised and produced by the gospel of Christ, we cannot be too thankful for so inestimable a benefit.

But there are those who assert that baptism, being an outward ceremony, cannot be of such vast importance to mankind. If he be a believer in Christ who makes the objection, let him examine the nature of baptism as he finds it represented in scripture, and, I presume, that he will soon have occasion to alter his opinion. Words cannot be stronger than these. “ Verily, verily, “ I say unto thee”—our Lord prefaces his injunction with this emphatic asseveration to shew the importance of the observation —“ except a man be *born of water and of “ the spirit, he cannot enter into the king- “ dom of God;” the kingdom of God* almost universally signifies that profession of

“ * Obsecrare milites coepit, ne primi sacramenti, quod
“ apud Domitium atque apud se questorem dixissent, memo-
“ riam deponerent.” Cæsar de Bel. Civ. L. 2.

gospel-righteousness which Jesus came into the world to establish. When Peter defended his brethren on the day of Pentecost, from the sneers and insinuations of a rude people, his sermon made such an impression on the multitude, that they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren! what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be *baptized*, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost — then they that gladly received his word were *baptized*." Let not baptism then be thought a mere outward ceremony; for the apostle expressly declares, that the essence of baptism consists in the inward conversion of the mind; it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God." Should it be said that we may possess a good conscience without the ceremony of baptism; we answer, that it is impossible, because, in the first instance, we should be guilty of disobedience. "Whosoever believeth and is *baptized*," said our Saviour, "shall

“ shall be saved,” I shall subjoin the observation of a valuable and sound divine * on these words.—“ Whosoever believeth and
“ is baptized, &c.” “ He joins them both
“ together. What are we to learn from
“ hence? that Jesus Christ has laid as great
“ a stress upon an outward ceremony, as
“ he hath done upon an inward virtue?
“ No; by no means; but this; that the
“ belief of christianity, without taking the
“ profession of it upon us and obliging
“ ourselves to live according to it, is not
“ sufficient. A man will, perhaps, tell you
“ that he believes the history of our Saviour
“ to be a true history, and that he hath a
“ great esteem for his person, and looks
“ upon his doctrine as the most excellent,
“ and useful, and divine morality, that was
“ ever delivered to the world. Why now
“ this seems a pretty fair account of a man’s
“ religion in comparison of what we have
“ from others. The gentleman that makes
“ this confession of his faith is civil to our
“ Lord Jesus Christ: But, yet this ex-
“ pression is not the same as to say, I believe
“ in Christ. Archbishop Sharp’s Works, Vol. V, p. 216.
“ tremely

“ tremely falls short of what one must do
“ that means to have any benefit by our
“ Saviour. How great a respect soever a
“ man pretends to have for the gospel, yet
“ if he do not enter himself into the number
“ of Christ’s disciples by baptism, vowing
“ all obedience to Christ Jesus as his Lord
“ and Master, and owning his religion upon
“ all occasions, and communicating in his
“ worship and service, we cannot say that
“ he is a Christian, though he may be a
“ well-wisher to christianity.”

This observation of the good archbishop applies itself to many even of those who have been partakers of the ordinance of baptism, but who neglect other positive duties, particularly that of the Lord’s supper, equally enjoined by the author of our religion.

If we are assured that we have the best reason for believing the gospel, let us believe it *effectually*, by conforming to every ordinance that may establish or confirm our faith. The gospel is, in fact, a covenant between God and us; if we comply not with the terms of salvation which he had
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do
our
the best right to enjoin, how can we expect
to reap the benefit which his goodness de-
signed for us? If our Saviour came into the
world with a full commission of reconcili-
ation to the lost sons of Adam, "how
" shall we escape if we neglect so great
" salvation?"

In this christian country, by a peculiar
blessing, we have been baptized in our early
youth; by a continuation of the same
blessing, we have been made acquainted by
anxious parents and affectionate friends,
with the great truths of christianity. At
our entrance into life, in our maturer years,
we become responsible for our own conduct.
By an useful and impressive ceremony, the
ceremony of confirmation, the church points
out to us that period of life when that re-
sponsibility takes place. Let not then the
opening dawn of our understanding be
clouded by distrust of our juvenile instruc-
tions; let it not be darkened by the in-
trusion of vicious and malignant habits.
Clear and chearful as the sun is the light of
true religion: let its bright beams accom-
pany

pany us through the various stages of human life, and when we have fulfilled our appointed time, let it shed a golden lustre on our grave.

With my best wishes to the friends of the cause, I am, Sir, very respectfully,
 Yours, &c.
 J. H. B. [Signature]

THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON GAZETTE.

Printed by J. H. B. [Signature]

N. XVI.

N^o XVI.

Effects of Religion on the Heart.

— And that sweet peace which goodness bosoms ever.

MILTON.

IF the religion of Christ be, as we have every reason to imagine, that powerful principle which invigorates the disposition of the heart, and influences the actions of mankind, we can have no hesitation in concluding, that it is the greatest blessing which was ever offered to the world. But whilst we reflect on this truth, we must be careful of indulging that favourite inference of the sceptic, that its effects on society are not equal to the flattering promises of its votaries. To answer this objection fully, would draw us into an argument which branches into a thousand channels. It is an argument, however, to which an ingenuous objector might easily assent, as it applies itself powerfully

powerfully to his *feelings*. His *inclination*, if he be like the rest of the world, I make no doubt, in many instances, stands in opposition to his *practice*. In this, at least, he joins with the equally ingenuous apostle, and exclaims, "the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do."

If we acknowledge this to be the case, we must dive beneath the surface for the origin of our conduct: we must sink into the *heart*. It is almost unnecessary to explain what is meant by the *heart* in this sense of the word. We must take expressions as we find them; and as we have been accustomed to consider the heart as the repository of our thoughts and inclinations, we must look there for the source of every plan. Indeed our divine Teacher himself refers us to this fountain from whence every good and every evil action flows. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil."

But

But before any thing can be brought forth, it must be first placed there by nature, or by grace. With respect to the endowments of the mind, it may fairly be asserted that they were originally good. It is inconsistent with the benevolence of the Supreme Being to suppose that he planted any principle in the heart of man which would prevent him from fulfilling those duties of society which he required. When God had finished the whole creation, "he
" saw every thing that he had made, and
" behold it was very good." The heart of man, there can be no doubt, came under this description. But as man, to fulfil the purposes of creation, was made a free agent; the operation of these good principles was left to himself. That our first father made an ill use of this liberty, that his sons have too faithfully followed his example, is a circumstance ever to be deplored, but by no means derogates from the goodness of God; because he hath procured a way to re-instate the posterity of Adam in the possession of those privileges which they had forfeited and lost.

On this foundation the religion of Jesus stands ; and it is impossible not to perceive the influence which such a religion ought to have upon the hearts of men. When the virtues implanted by nature in the human breast, feel the reviving beams of true religion, they spread forth their leaves and flourish, and bring forth fruit abundantly ; but when they remain uncultivated, when they are suffered to arise from the earth uncherished, or when the winds of heaven beat unkindly on their heads, every branch is turned aside, and the fruit falls unripened to the ground.

Select from the catalogue of moral virtues one which appears likely to benefit society, and make the possessor happy. Consider *charity* in the ordinary acceptation of the word. Under the influence of religion, what happy effects attend it on every side ! According to the precept of our benevolent Lord, exemplified by himself, the sick receive the blessings of medicine, the hungry are fed, and the distressed comforted. Not content with relieving those whom misfortune casts in his way, the man of charity traverses deserts to fulfil this duty of his religion,

religion, and exposes himself to burning suns and unwholesome climates. It is his pride and his glory, “to dive into the depths of dungeons; to plunge into the infections of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten; to attend to the neglected; to visit the forsaken; and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries *.” No selfish view mixes itself with the practice of virtue. Neither worldly wealth nor worldly honours excite its motions, or promote its progress. Every thing is pure, every thing is disinterested. No natural habit, no principle of mere natural religion could produce such extensive benefits. Nature inculcates maxims of self-preservation: religion goes many a step beyond it; and as she travels, scatters this golden precept—“*no man liveth to himself alone.*”

Again, consider *charity* as a feeling, as a mere principle of nature, uncultivated and

* Burke's Character of Howard.

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undirected.

undirected. Where is she? Alas! her footsteps are hardly to be found. Savage nations have little notion of charity; and even in more civilized society, where the mind is left solely to its own directions, her exertions at best are but transitory and feeble. If an object of compassion appear before her, she turns away—for, she may want compassion herself. But does the object plead strongly for relief? She parts with a small pittance to free herself from a troublesome petitioner: or, perhaps, prudence recommends a more plentiful assistance, as an hour may come when a plentiful return may be expected.

That charity is a distinguishing feature of the gospel, needs hardly be repeated; and when we cast our eye over the page of history, and behold a list of the most noble benefactors of mankind, we shall be at no loss in perceiving the effects of religion on the human heart.

To pass over many other reflections, does not religion consider *humility* as peculiarly her own? In the Roman or the Grecian sage we look in vain for so powerful a virtue: It formed no part of ancient ethics, it influenced

fluenced not the conduct of ancient heroes. But under the christian dispensation what wonders does it accomplish? “*I take pleasure,*” says St. Paul, “in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for *when I am weak, then am I strong.*” When human nature is most humbled, then is the faith of a Christian most apparent; for he rests not in his own strength, but in the strength of that God who can infuse vigour into the feeblest heart. True humility of mind, founded on the doctrines of the gospel, and arising from a proper estimate of human life, produces that pure motive of conduct which smooths all the roughnesses of mortal ways, and bestows that sweet tranquillity *which goodness bosoms ever*, and which is equalled only by the repose of heaven.

But satisfied as we are of the truth of this assertion, that virtue must *dwell in the heart* before it can be practised, it is no less true that good *principles alone* will not make us good men; they must be also directed to a *good end*. That the religion of Christ is, in every respect, calculated to effect this im-

150 *Effects of Religion on the Heart.*

portant purpose, is evident to every serious inquirer ; yet even this religion has no force, if we content ourselves with a bare knowledge of her duties, and do not endeavour to make her the supreme ruler of the human breast. Even bad men, strange as it may appear, have been religious ; and while they have violated every principle of moral duty, they have scrupulously attended to the injunctions of religion. When Charles *the bad*, king of Navarre, was called upon to fulfil a treaty, when the consecrated wafer was presented to him, wicked as he was, he shuddered at the idea of profaning a ceremony thus sacred, and pleaded his having broken his fast, as an excuse for having refused the proffered sacrament *. There was no hypocrisy in this business, whatever leaven there might be of superstition : and, however it may be esteemed a solecism in morals, it is true in point of fact, that both wicked men and infidels are frequently the slaves of credulity.

It is the object of religion, under the operation of the divine spirit of grace, to

* Gifford's *History of France*, Vol. II, p. 124.

influence

influence the heart in all its movements. The *head* of man may be stored with learning and knowledge, may be able to accomplish works of skill and judgment, may be competent to advise even in cases of difficulty and danger, yet if the *heart be not right within him*, every temporal qualification will be of no avail. Too frequently does human life afford instances of this truth; too frequently are wit and wisdom, for want of this support, buried in one common ruin.

But the heart which possesses *goodness*, possesses all that this world can bestow. An explanation of the word cannot be given, it must be *felt*. By religion only, such as that word expresses, can that *sweet peace*, the consequence of well directed inclinations, be acquired, by religion only can it be enjoyed; not that religion which is to be found in forms and ceremonies, however effectual they may be in promoting this excellent end, but that which mixes itself with every thought and action, and becomes the *reigning passion of the soul*.

N° XVII.

*Effects of Religion in subduing the irregular
Inclinations.*

They sat them down to weep, nor only tears
 Rain'd at their eyes, but high winds worse within
 Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
 Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore
 Their inward state of mind ; calm region once
 And full of peace, now tost and turbulent :—

MILTON.

As no man, for recreation, would prefer a walk in a tempest to the enjoyment of a serene evening and a placid sky, so it is reasonable to imagine, that no one would willingly encounter the turbulence of irregular appetites and inclinations, in preference to the calm sensations, and tranquil pleasures of religious virtue. If we consider the nature of man as delineated by revelation, we shall find that he is not now what he once was. The region which he
 once

once inhabited was *calm* and *full of peace* ; now, alas ! to suit the purposes of his present condition, it is *tost* and *turbulent*. The passions which flowed gently forward, and were originally intended to promote the happiness of man, are now violently agitated, and in a thousand instances are the parents of misery. But let not the perversion of these natural inclinations lead to a distrust of the divine benevolence. Blind though we are to numerous appearances both in the natural and moral world, ignorant of many circumstances which puzzle and perplex us, here we do not want an interpreter. We cannot but know, that an attempt to conquer the malignant passions, through the divine grace, will be attended with success, and consequently rewarded by *Him* who hath thus wonderfully constructed the human heart.

This being the acknowledged state of human life, our next inquiry is, how this conquest must be atchieved? Ask the philosopher of modern days ; he coldly refers you to *reason*. But experience shews us the weakness of reason in combating the pas-
H 5 sions.

sions. If reason then cannot obtain the victory, what is his next resort? He plunges into all the mazes of inevitable necessity, and leaves the question to the next sceptic that will take it up. How much more genial, how much more satisfactory would all his reflections have been, had he turned to those pages where a merciful God unlocks his treasures, and, in the person of perfect innocence and virtue, exhibits the purest pattern of unruffled temper and subdued inclinations! “Learn of me,” says Christ, “for I am meek and lowly in heart, “and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Rest unto your souls! the very expression animates our endeavours: we are driven forward by an irresistible impulse to seek that state of tranquillity and peace. Christ in his human nature found it, and it was the great end of his appearance amongst men to recommend it to the world. He did not send his hearers, for this important knowledge, to search the records of past ages, or to investigate the reasoning faculties of man; these, he knew, were fallacious interpreters of the divine will. But he directs

them to *the study of the heart*; he offers himself for their imitation, not in the vain-glorious language of a self-taught philosopher, but in the spirit of lowliness and meekness, the true characteristics of the religion which he was then presenting to mankind.

As the passions are so intimately connected with the nature of man, and indeed are radically implanted in his breast, the direction of them, according to the original intentions of Providence, must necessarily form his perpetual and important employment. Negligence in this respect cannot but be fatal. It is like turning loose the untamed and ferocious animals of the desert, and spreading ruin and desolation on every side. But the subjugation of these turbulent appetites, as far as respects human enjoyment, in some measure rewards itself; and, which is of still greater importance, produces that happy disposition of mind which anticipates the blessedness of heaven.

Many a treatise on the passions, laboured with all the energy of reason, has been offered to the world; and no wonder; for

a regulation of the passions is universally acknowledged, nay, is experimentally known, to form the happiness of man; whilst an impetuous gratification of them necessarily produces human laws and human punishments, as checks to those dangerous convulsions which might otherwise ensue. That such treatises have not always been productive of good effects, must be attributed to that radical defect which attends every system that does not take christianity for its basis. The exuberance of passion has been, no doubt, repressed by the reason and reflection of the wise. A Plato or a Socrates may be allowed, perhaps, in some sense, to have subdued themselves. But what must have been the case of those who were *no* philosophers? How must the ambition of uncontrouled greatness have raged! how must the rude behaviour of savage life have run wild with barbarity!

Peter the great, emperor of Russia, made a law, that if any nobleman beat, or ill-treated his slaves, he should be looked upon as an insane man, and a guardian should be appointed to take care of his person, and
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of his estate. He had one day struck his chief gardener without any reason. The gardener, a man of great sensibility, was so afflicted at it, that he took to his bed immediately, and died in a few days. Peter, hearing of this, exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, "Alas! I have civilized my own subjects, I have conquered other nations, yet I have not been able to civilize, or to conquer myself *."

They are not human laws, but the laws of religion, which can effectually controul the passions, and civilize the heart. It might have been said to Peter the great, when he transgressed the law which he had made himself, "*These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*"

To obtain this conquest of a man over himself, he must not, like an injudicious warrior, exert a powerful army to gain a few unimportant provinces: he must at once march to the strongest fortress, and take possession of the capital. To endeavour to suppress a few vices only which lurk within

* Seward's Anecdotes of distinguished Persons. Supplement.

the folds of the human heart, is to leave behind an unconquered country which will harass and disconcert the schemes of the assailants. It is the *whole nature* of man which must be brought into subjection. And this, under the present circumstances of human life, can only be effected by religion.

This observation may be considered as universally true, because there is no other principle which equally applies itself to the different orders and distinctions of men. The high and the low, the learned and the illiterate, as Paul and Barnabas observed to the people of Lystra, are *men of like passions* with one another. Some universal law, therefore, it is likely, would be applied by the great author of our common nature, to regulate and improve them. This law is revealed by the gospel, and is communicated to every child of man by the religion of Jesus Christ. Even the Lawgiver himself was made subject to the affections of human nature, that he might shew us how to apply them with advantage to the human soul.

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But that which renders religion superior to all other motives in the conquest of the passions is, that it is not subject to the imbecility or indecision of reason. We are no longer at liberty to indulge some passions, while we renounce others ; to cherish feelings at the expence of morality ; to love the offence, while we detest the offender. No. “ The word of God is quick and “ powerful, and sharper than any two-edged “ sword, piercing even to the dividing “ asunder of soul and spirit, and of the “ joints and marrow, and is a discerner of “ the thoughts and intents of the hearts.” The declarations of scripture are express and infallible ; they *will* the salvation of all mankind, and they point out the true method to accomplish it. The religion of Christ carries conviction with it ; and whilst it subdues every irregular inclination, it nourishes those finer feelings of the soul, which prove its alliance with a more perfect state of existence.

Men of every character and of every degree of information, may, under the influence of religion, learn the true use of
life,

life, and include, in one comprehensive view, the whole compass of their duty. They may acquire a knowledge of more importance than all the schools can teach; a knowledge, in which the meanest servant of Christ has greatly the advantage of the acutest philosopher.

N° XVIII.

*Means offered by Religion for subduing the
irregular Inclinations.*

How happy is he born and taught,
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill !

Whose passions not his masters are—

This man is freed from servile hands
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall ;
Lord of himself, tho' not of lands ;
And having nothing, yet hath all.

SIR HENRY WOTTON.

THE consciousness of self-command is that point of human conduct after which the man of virtue willingly aspires. The advantages which accrue to him who is *lord of himself*, both with respect to this life and the next, render this conquest an object of the utmost importance. The difference between

tween two men of opposite principles in society, originates in this distinction ; the one endeavours to subdue every tumultuous passion as it rises, the other gives the rein to its unbounded gratification. The latter of these characters therefore approaches to the lawless irregularities of savage life, the former to the perfection of moral and religious conduct. Self-enjoyment is the expectation of both, but they pursue different methods, and arrive at different conclusions. A proper coercion of our natural inclinations, then, however inimical it may seem to the happiness of man, appears to be the first step towards accomplishing this desirable end.

An unprejudiced exertion of the rational faculties may assist us in arriving at this truth, but nothing short of religion can assure us that our labour will not be in vain. As reason could not explain to us the degeneracy of human nature, so reason of itself could not reinstate us in the possession of all those privileges with which man was originally invested. It is this difference between man in a paradisaical state, as it
may

may be called, and man in a state of probation, which makes coercion necessary in the government of the passions. “ It has
“ been said,” says a philosopher*, in the
proper sense of the word, “ that a life of
“ virtue is a life of mortification and war-
“ fare. And nothing is more true; not-
“ withstanding that, upon the whole, such
“ a life must be most happy. The nature
“ of man is miserably corrupted. Criminal
“ passions - crave indulgence; and it re-
“ quires great efforts to resist them: crimi-
“ nal habits - must be overcome; and this
“ is a work of long and difficult labour.
“ Things, that by their agreeable qualities
“ attract our notice, and engage our liking,
“ often prove a snare; and it requires in-
“ cessant watchfulness to keep aloof from
“ them, or, when they fall in our way, to
“ prevent them gaining on our affections.
“ The best men fall into transgression,
“ which in a good man is always followed
“ by repentance; and repentance, though
“ most salutary in its effects, is attended

* Beattie's Elements of Moral Science, Vol. II. p. 25.

“ with

“ with great anguish of mind. How many
 “ dangers and disappointments must they
 “ encounter who engage in active life!
 “ Yet such a life is incomparably happier
 “ than security with idleness. Even so,
 “ virtue may be a warfare, but it is, upon
 “ the whole, happy as well as honourable,
 “ and never fails to be crowned with victory
 “ and eternal peace.”

It is impossible to peruse the New Testament without being satisfied how far religion is concerned in governing the irregular inclinations. Adopting this principle, the human mind, ever prone to extremes, has sometimes been hurried into an opposite conduct; and, under the pretence of religious mortification, has endured the pressure of superstitious and dangerous austerities. But nothing less than this is expected by true religion. Are these the benevolent doctrines of the gospel? Are these the mild restraints of christianity? Are these the kind corrections of a parent? We should remember that it is not the will of the Author of nature to eradicate, but to regulate the passions of men. For the best
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of purposes they were implanted in our breasts ; for the best of purposes they remain there still. Expel them from the sphere of humanity, and you remove a powerful motive to fulfil the ends of creation. But arrange them according to the will of God, produce them under the restrictions of the gospel, and you open a scene of happiness which divine benevolence intended us to enjoy.

It is not mere abstract pain which can ever be pleasing to a God of goodness. He desires not the sackcloth of the Anchorite, nor the crook of the Gentoo. If we would truly please him, we must work conviction in our heart, as well as mortification in our actions : if we abstain from pleasure, it must be for the sake of some superior good ; if we submit to suffering, it must be for the sake of duty. “ If ye, *through the*
“ *spirit*, do mortify the deeds of the body,
“ ye shall live.”

When we consider christianity in this light, it will stand fully acquitted of all severity of doctrine, or austerity in principle. True it is, that by a due application of the
passions

passions themselves, by exciting our hopes and alarming our fears, she restrains our hand from the work of wickedness; but this is a kind of wholesome discipline, a discipline which “delivers us from the “bondage of corruption to the glorious “liberty of the children of God.”

The means offered by religion for ruling the human breast, are as exalted in their kind as they are important in their consequences. *Love, desire and hope* are put in motion; not to distract the heart of man, but to place it on one great object of affection: to direct him how to enjoy such good as God is pleased to bestow, but at the same time to inform him, that he must love nothing but what *he* loves, desire nothing but what *he* desires, hope for nothing beyond *his* favour. These passions are regulated by the gentle influence of that Spirit, whose operations suggest the thoughts, and direct the actions of the good christian. Controuled too, by the same Spirit, are all his tumultuous inclinations. Do the seeds of anger and resentment reside within his breast? They are turned upon his own offences.

offences. Is hatred found there? It becomes only an hatred of sin. Are grief and fear there? They are mellowed by a belief of the mercies of God, and the promises of a Redeemer to wipe away the falling tear from the eye of penitential sorrow.

Happy the man whose passions flow in obedience to reason, and whose habits are all derived from the influence of religion. Unknown to him are the labour and severity of conquest: unknown to him the restless perturbations of a troubled conscience. Engrafted in his heart are those principles which spread serenity around him, and which *even here* afford him a taste of those exquisite sensations which can alone be perfected in heaven. But to attain this disposition of mind, constant watchfulness and never ceasing prayer are indispensably necessary. It is the grace of God only, that *peculiar* blessing of the gospel, which brings forth these beneficial effects. Without it nature may struggle, but it will not conquer; our passions may rise, but alas! when will they subside?

There

There is no man living who sees not the necessity of subduing his irregular inclinations. Let there be no man living who does not endeavour to obtain the victory. Heavenly help is always at hand; but unless we pray for it with an earnestness adequate to its importance, we have no right or reason to expect it. "Ask for it then, "and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, "knock and it shall be opened unto you." This inspired knowledge shall be worth all your search; it will improve every faculty of your body, and bring comfort to your soul; it will refine the corruption of your nature and spiritualize your affections; it will teach you the true value of life, and open a prospect of everlasting glory. This knowledge it is which finishes the character of the christian; and when it has incorporated itself into the recesses of his heart, and become, as it were, a part of his existence, then it is that he feels all the benefits of a revealed Saviour, and acquires an exquisite relish for the true pleasures of religion.

"Set your affections on things above,
"not on things on the earth. Mortify
"your

“ your members which are upon the earth ;
“ fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection,
“ evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things
“ sake the wrath of God cometh on the
“ children of disobedience. In the which
“ ye also walked sometime, when ye lived
“ in them. But now you also put off all
“ these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy,
“ filthy communication out of your mouth.
“ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye
“ have put off the old man with his deeds;
“ and have put on the new man, which is
“ renewed in knowledge after the image of
“ Him that created him.”

N° XIX.

Effects of Religion on the Disposition of the Mind.

He that has light within his own clear breast
 May sit i'th' centre and enjoy bright day :
 But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
 Benighted walks under the mid-day sun ;
 Himself is his own dungeon.

MILTON.

IT is not consistent with reason to suppose, that that principle which was sent from heaven to make men happy, should be unsuccessful in the attempt ; but it is perfectly so to imagine that, in all respects, the effect should be correspondent to the importance of the cause. Whosoever studies the revealed will of God, and considers how effectually it provides for all the wants of men, spiritual as well as temporal, will be at no loss to estimate the value of that influence which religion possesses over their

their hearts and dispositions. If it be the property of religion to allay the turbulence of our natural passions, and not only restrain those animal propensities which are so dangerous to human life, but reduce them, from the condition of rebels to that of faithful and obedient subjects, we may look for still further fruits, and expect personal enjoyment to be promoted, as far as our nature is capable of receiving it. And promoted indeed it is; for he that bears within his breast the effulgence of religious wisdom, whose principles are sound, and whose actions, allowing for the frailty of man, are irreproachable, may sit in the darkest corner of the earth, and enjoy the clear and calm sunshine of conscious integrity.

“ Virtue could see to do what virtue would

“ By her own radiant light, though sun and moon

“ Were in the flat sea sunk.”—

MILTON.

Virtue, by which I mean that habit of active goodness which flows from the pure principle of religion, possesses all those advantages which the generality of mankind
I 2 desire.

desire. If happiness be ever found it must be here. If life be ever enjoyed unmixed with corroding cares and tormenting solitudes, it must be by him, the dispositions of whose mind glide calmly forward, under the influence of the spirit of divine love. "I am the light of the world," says our Lord, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Can any one doubt but that the light of life is the fruit of the Spirit? And "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." In contemplating these amiable qualities of the human mind we have arrived at that point, to which christianity directs her warmest influence. It is here she rests the evidence of her truth. It is here she displays that degree of excellence which confounds her enemies and captivates her votaries. It is here also that she affords a glimpse of those heavenly dispositions which distinguish the beatified state of all her faithful servants.

A reverse

A reverse of this picture will greatly strengthen the argument. Vice not only appears, but *is* hideous. A *mid-day* sun cannot brighten the *dark soul and foul thoughts* of the wicked man. If he behold the splendor of that eye of the world, it is only to tell him how *he hates his beams*. Every habit of his mind is gloomy. "*Himself is his own dungeon.*" "If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him: he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

But it is a true sense of religion which recovers a man from this melancholy and dejection, from this misery and despair. It never was intended by the Author of all goodness to make his worship a painful service. If severity be requisite, it is only to be used as a medicine for the soul, as a restorative to those joys which are the proper fruits of a religious life. When gloom and dissatisfaction shew themselves in the countenance of one who calls himself a Christian, believe that he has mistaken the object of his devotion, and instead of a

kind and benevolent mistress, falls prostrate before an inflexible and unfeeling tyrant. For such, indeed, is superstition. But the religion of the gospel is far different in her injunctions. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness." "The kingdom of God consisteth in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Natural disposition will, perhaps, sometimes prevail too much over a mind well disposed to religion. Timidity and fear will sometimes shake the nerve, and cloud the prospects, even of good men. But they owe not these feelings to religion. Where they do not originate in distemper, the energy of a good mind, influenced by the benignant spirit of grace, will rise superior to these impressions; and will say with the apostle "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "A celebrated writer on the side of scepticism and irreligion, in a book published, since his death, to recommend atheism to the world, has been pleased to say, that all the devout persons he had ever seen were melancholy. This,"
says

says the good Bishop Horne*, "might
 " very possibly be; for in the first place,
 " it is most likely that he saw very few,
 " his friends and acquaintance being of
 " another sort; and secondly, the sight of
 " him would make a devout person melan-
 " choly at any time."

If we examine the lives of those good men whose histories adorn the annals of the christian church, we shall find that cheerfulness invariably formed a distinguishing feature in their character. I speak not of those dark and melancholy men, who clothed their religion in a different dress. I leave Bruno to his La Trappe, and Symeon Stylites to his pillar. But I revere the joyful aspects of many venerable disciples of Christ, who have in every age, since the establishment of christianity, shewn themselves the cheerful worshippers of a gracious God. "Let all those," says David, "who put their trust in thee, rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them

* Horne's Disc. Vol. III. p. 96.

“ also that love thy name be joyful in
“ thee.”

For this reason a good Christian ought to be the best tempered, as well as the most chearful person in the world. The doctrines of his religion, which inculcate devotion towards God, enjoin benevolence towards men. Though it is possible for even a good man to be overcome by a fretful habit, yet he should remember that it is a blemish in any character; and that he should endeavour to produce in himself a peaceable, candid, affectionate, and humane frame of mind; that the general turn of his thoughts should be placid, and the bent of his behaviour chearful. Let the habitually ill-natured measure themselves by this rule; and let them feel that they depart from the true spirit of christianity, in the same proportion as they approach to an ungenial moroseness, or an unforgiving malignity of disposition.

A philosopher of modern days *, some of whose private letters have lately been made public, strongly recommends, *and upon this*

* Dr. Hartley.

principle,

principle, this amiable disposition of mind. In a letter * to his sister, written at an early age, he says, “ I believe it will
 “ neither be an useless nor false observa-
 “ tion, that whatever a young person
 “ applies himself to at first, is commonly
 “ his delight afterwards: what I argue
 “ from hence is, that if you and I perform
 “ our duty to God, our neighbour, and
 “ ourselves, as well as human infirmity
 “ will admit, and at all other times be
 “ discreet, active, and *cheerful*, we shall
 “ receive more satisfaction than the most
 “ voluptuous and delicate person, and it
 “ will be infinitely to our advantage in
 “ this world and the ensuing eternity.” He begins his letter with, “ Behave yourself
 “ cheerfully and briskly at all times;” he ends it, “ Observe I recommend cheerfulness and quickness to you.”—And again, he says at a later period of his life—“ I
 “ study much harder than ever I did, and
 “ am much more *cheerful* and happy—my
 “ chief studies are upon religious subjects,

* Seward's Anec, of Distinguished Persons. Supplement.

“ and especially upon the true meaning of
“ the Bible. I cannot express to you what
“ inward peace and satisfaction these con-
“ templations afford me: you remember
“ how much I was overcome with super-
“ stitious fears when I was very young; I
“ thank God that he has at last brought
“ me to a lively sense of his infinite good-
“ ness and mercy to all his creatures, and
“ that I see it both in all his works, and in
“ every page of his word.”

It is of much importance to the present age that religion be recommended to it with a cheerful aspect. I would not, by this expression, countenance, even in the slightest manner, those loose principles of religion, too commonly received in these degenerate times, which may be thought reconcileable with a free life: but I allude to those genuine duties which the gospel requires, duties unincumbered with superstition on the one hand, and sufficiently guarded from licentiousness on the other. It is thus, and thus only, that the world can be recovered from its present disordered state; thus only that those halcyon days
may

may be expected when peace, religious and civil peace, shall again revisit the earth, and prepare the way for a kingdom of everlasting happiness.

It is reported to have been said by a French emigrant of high distinction, that it is our religion which has hitherto, under God, preserved this country amidst the wreck of nations *. May we prove ourselves deserving of so eminent a compliment! May we properly appreciate the establishment of christianity under which we reside; for surely, a more pure, moderate, and, as a modern writer † styles it, *cheerful* church, few countries can produce.

“ Think not, (I conclude in the words
“ of the same author †,) that religion will
“ destroy your cheerfulness. No; it will
“ promote it. Nothing gives so fine
“ spirits as a clear conscience; a bosom
“ that feels the satisfaction of having dis-
“ charged its duties to God and man.
“ Then recreation and harmless pleasure.

* Robison's Proofs of Conspiracy, p. 456.

† Knox's Christian Philosophy, p. 274.

‡ Ibid. p. 389.

“are truly delightful. The sweet, in such
“circumstances, is without bitter; the
“rose without a thorn; the honey without
“a sting. I have ever recommended a
“*cheerful religion*; because all religion
“was certainly intended to make men
“happy.”



N° XX.

On Peace of Soul, and a religious Mind.

— For th' attentive mind,

By this harmonious action on her powers,
Becomes herself harmonious; wont so oft
In outward things to meditate the charm.
Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home
To find a kindred order, to exert
Within herself this elegance of love,
This fair inspired delight: her temper'd powers
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.

AKENSIDE.

A FREQUENT contemplation of the finest models of art, a frequent observation of the beauties of nature, a frequent and attentive perusal of the writings of the most elegant and eminent scholars, produce in man that high relish of the mind, which is distinguished by the name of *taste*. The possession of this quality is the source of a thousand

sand intellectual pleasures. Wherever his eye turns, his heart is delighted—

“ Still new beauties meet his lonely walk,
 “ And loves unfelt attract him.”—

If all be right within his heart, the impression made by the several objects of his contemplation will be strong and lasting. The harmony which he beholds in nature will communicate itself to his thoughts. His meditation on the *charms of order* will induce him to “ seek at home, to find a “ kindred order;” and the maturity of virtue *may* spring from so well cultivated an imagination.

“ It has been often observed,” says a learned and ingenious artist*, “ that the “ good and virtuous man can alone acquire “ a true or just relish even of works of art. “ This opinion will not appear entirely “ without foundation, when we consider “ that the same habit of mind which is ac- “ quired by our search after truth in the “ more serious duties of life, is only trans-

* Sir Joshua Reynolds, Disc. 7.

“ferred to the lighter amusements. The
 “same disposition, the same desire to find
 “something steady, substantial and dura-
 “ble, on which the mind can lean, as it
 “were, and rest with safety, actuates us in
 “both cases. The subject only is changed.
 “We pursue the same method in our search
 “after the idea of beauty and perfection in
 “each; of virtue, by looking forwards
 “beyond ourselves to society, and to the
 “whole; of arts, by extending our views
 “in the same manner to all ages and all
 “times.”

Theories of this nature no doubt are beautiful and pleasing, but if we really wish for those enjoyments of the mind which neither the *breathing marble*, the *column*, or the *towering arch* can give, we must proceed one step further, and contemplate the beauty and harmony of that revealed religion which alone adds tranquillity to life, and gives indeed to every passion, “a chaster, milder,
 “more attractive mien.” The mere beauty of virtue is delusive; we may admire the features without imitating the aspect. The beauty of religion is more impressive. We
 cannot

cannot behold the motives of christianity without wishing to transplant each amiable and alluring grace into our own bosom. And so accommodating is the principle of religion to the wants and wishes of mankind, that no one ever yet supplicated her help in vain.

The universal influence of this principle is one argument of its truth. We see the philosopher of nature building systems of imaginary virtue, and exerting every energy of his mind to reform the world. But the beauty of his fabric is soon deformed by fluctuating opinion and actual transgression. Having brought his disciple to this point, he leaves him to extricate himself as well as he is able. The disciple, possessing no knowledge but what he derived from an insufficient master, falls a sacrifice to his imperfect lessons. On the contrary, the christian philosopher places his instruction upon firmer ground. Though well qualified to meditate on the *charms of order*, though revolving in his mind the natural beauty of virtue, he draws his pictures from a more perfect model than that of nature. He

looks on man as he is formed by grace ; he therefore studies *his* character and perfections who revealed himself to the world for this purpose, and who, to make his appearance more effectual to the salvation of all men, became a propitiatory sacrifice for the offences of mankind.

It is the influence of religion on the heart, on the disposition of the mind, on the general habits of the man in every description of human life, which produces that true content and happiness, that peace of soul and tranquillity of spirit, which is the earnest wish, the importunate prayer of every Christian. And can we doubt the efficacy of this principle, if we consider, for a moment, what is promised by the gospel, and what is experienced by the believer? What indeed was the awful legacy of the Author of our religion, and how have we received it? “ Peace I leave with you, *my* peace I give “ unto you : *not as the world giveth*, give I “ unto you.” It is spiritual peace, it is man’s peace with God and with his own conscience, which produces those sensations of comfort, which *pass all understanding*,
and

and anticipate the pleasures of a more perfect state of existence.

The reliance of man on his own powers for rectitude of life, a favourite principle of those who study only the religion of nature, offers a mere shadow of peace. A sudden impulse of passion destroys his integrity; and he knows not how to re-instate the dignity of his nature in the favour of the Author of his being. But it is the happiness of a Christian, to possess a never-failing source of comfort: this is, the assurance of his restoration to spiritual life by that Saviour, who "his own self bare our sins in
" his own body on the tree, that we being
" dead to sin should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we were healed." Under this gospel assurance, our peace is made with God, and our soul remains in tranquillity. " Being justified by faith
" we have peace with God, through our
" Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we
" have access by faith into this grace
" wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of
" the glory of God. And not only so, but
" we glory in tribulations also, knowing
" that

“ that tribulation worketh patience ; and
 “ patience experience ; and experience
 “ hope ; and hope maketh [us] not ashamed
 “ [of our sufferings as if they were vain]
 “ because *the love of God is shed abroad in*
 “ *our hearts* by the Holy Ghost which is
 “ given unto us.”

Hence then springs that peace of soul, which gilds the days of the good man with happiness. Assured of a restoration to divine favour through the benevolent merits and infinite love of an heavenly deliverer, he feels a transformation of heart which raises him above those casualties which disturb the tranquillity of worldly men. Secure in his *hope*, confirmed in his *faith*, he makes *charity* the rule of all his actions, and becomes possessed of that greatest of all blessings, a religious mind.

Here we have no picture of speculative goodness. Peace of soul implies not indolence and inaction ; it rests not satisfied with contemplation, but expands itself into every branch of christian duty. How delightful are those sensations which arise from a true sense of religion ! The eye is pleased :

pleased with every object from whence instruction may be drawn, and the heart rejoices at the prospect of immortality. We behold the race of men with tenderness; we consider them as fellow-beings of eternal glory, and are in all respects as ready, as alert, to do them good, as we are to succour and to comfort ourselves. This benevolence of heart raises all nature into importance.

“ Not a breeze

“ Flies o’er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes

“ The setting sun’s effulgence, not a strain.

“ From all the tenants of the warbling shades

“ Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake

“ Fresh pleasure unreprieved *.”

.. Possessed of this internal peace, the earth exhibits to our view something more than a *steril-promontory*. It is a fruitful and luxuriant landscape. We see the chain of love with which the God of nature connects all his creatures. We are charmed with those feelings reflected on our souls by a ray of his divinity. We endeavour to imitate the spotless perfection of our great Creator: we

* Akenside’s Pleasures of the Imagination.

are encouraged to do so by the book of glad tidings, and by the image of himself which beamed upon the world in the person of Jesus Christ.

- “ We feel within ourselves
 “ His energy-divine : he tells the heart,
 “ He meant, he made us to behold and love
 “ What he beholds and loves, the general orb
 “ Of life and being ; to be great like him
 “ Beneficent and active. Thus the men
 “ Whom nature’s works can charm with God himself
 “ Hold converse ; grow familiar, day by day,
 “ With his conceptions, act upon his plan,
 “ And form to his the relish of their souls.”

When the essence of religion is thus incorporated with the heart of man, we see before our eyes a different being from that which nature, independent of this principle, presented to us. Instead of boisterous and tumultuous passions, behold righteousness and peace ! Instead of *wars and fightings*, see ! gentleness and joy. This is not an imaginary contrast. Christianity every where assures us of its truth. Its principles tend directly to this delightful point, and sometimes, alas ! *but* sometimes, we behold it realized. That this conduct is not general, should

should be no discouragement to attempt it. Every advance towards it brings its own comforts with it. It is "a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it, and happy is every one that retaineth it."

To possess a mind thus tempered by the pure spirit of the gospel, is to experience all the enjoyments which nothing but such a possession can bestow. Internal peace comprehends every blessing, and is not to be ruffled by the contentions of the world. Public quarrels such a character will avoid, as the general disturbers of the earth; and he will keep himself free from private animosities, as not only evil in themselves, but the root and origin of a thousand other evils. His conversation is in heaven; his thoughts are turned towards his Maker from the dawn of the morning, to the last and deepest shade of the evening. Every inward meditation confirms his heart in goodness, and every prospect of the world opens his sensibilities to all his fellow-creatures. Such the man whom *the Lord delighteth to honour*. He converses in the world, for the world's benefit, and his own; but he is
neither

neither entangled by its pleasures nor seduced by its vices. He treads among dangers; but as *he knows on whom he has believed*, his confidence is not shaken, neither is his peace destroyed. For his *attentive mind*, his mind fully bent upon all the harmonies of religion, *becomes itself harmonious*; and he, in the language of St. Paul, “with
“ open face beholding as in a glass, the
“ glory of the Lord, is changed into the
“ same image [with him] from glory to
“ glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.”

N° XXI.

On religious Meditation.

— And wisdom's self
 Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude ;
 Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,
 She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
 That in the various bustles of resort
 Were * all to ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.

MILTON.

WHEN the mind of man is fully impressed with the necessity of attaining divine wisdom, it becomes an object of no common solicitude to inquire, *how* this important point is to be accomplished. Too long accustomed to expatiate in the fields of dissipation, and to direct every energy to the gratification of momentary pleasures, the thoughts are too unsettled to rest at once in that tranquillity, which opens the path to

* All to *entirely*. Warton.

SO

so desirable a companion as contemplation. If we look down upon the world from the elevation of a calm retreat, it is like viewing the ocean from the point of a promontory: the waves rise and fall; they recede with the wind, or the tide; then return in tempests, and foam over the projecting rock. The avocations of mankind, now agitated by contending passions, now hurried by the tumults of business, naturally recall this image to the mind. And if we add, the perpetual distractions of what are falsely called amusements; the various and tormenting phantoms which float from one place of public resort to another; what can we conclude from so tumultuous a prospect, but that the earth, as well as the sea, is subject to a violent and restless agitation?

“Where, then, we may ask, shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not in me.” Too true it is, that if we seek for divine wisdom on the stage of the
K world

world only, she will elude our search. So frail is our resolution, so impotent our strength, that if we throw ourselves unguarded into this dangerous vortex, we shall hurry only to our own destruction. But let us pause upon the brink of the torrent. Let us consider "how fearful and dizzy it is, to cast our eyes so low." Let us recollect that when means are sought, means never will be wanting to restore us to the true dignity of human nature, to the enjoyment of those privileges assured to the sons of men by the appearance of their Redeemer.

If our danger arises from too indiscriminate an acquaintance with the world, from the indulgence of a turbulent and restless disposition, from an earnest and unceasing pursuit of pleasure, we should seek our remedy in the opposite behaviour: we should withdraw into scenes of quiet, we should inure our minds to recollection, and contemplate piously and seriously, the end and aim of that being which the bounty of the Almighty hath bestowed upon us. Meditation becomes a powerful mean of grace, when employed in the service of religion ;
and

and retirement from the busy world for this important purpose, will be found not only an advantage to the man, but the duty of the christian. "Solitude," says an eloquent preacher *, "is the hallowed ground which religion hath, in every age, chosen for her own. There, her inspiration is felt, and her secret mysteries elevate the soul. There, falls the tear of contrition; there, rises towards heaven the sigh of the heart; there, melts the soul with all the tenderness of devotion, and pours itself forth before him who made, and him who redeemed it."——Here, abstracted from foreign objects, the soul rests only on itself, God alone is present; and awful are the meditations which are then presented to the mind. Every thing which can engage, every thing which can command attention, rushes into the heart. It is then evident that man is a *religious being*. His soul is fired with devotion. He perceives the necessity of gospel-righteousness, to restore within his breast, the defaced image of his

* Blair.

Maker. He is thankful for this approach to God, and feels the influence of the divine presence in every future action of his life.

— 'Tis most true,

“ That musing melancholy most affects

“ The pensive secrecy of desert cell,

“ Far from the cheerful haunts of men and herds,

“ And sits as safe as in a senate house.”

But it is no melancholy impression, in the harsher acceptation of the word, which religious meditation makes upon the soul. No dark thoughts, or perplexed imaginations settle upon the contemplative mind. Clear are the prospects, sweet are the musings of the meditating Christian. With the book of revelation in his hand, every cloud of doubt or error gradually disappears. Heaven opens on his view ; and his penetrating eye searches the regions of eternity.

In recommending religious meditation as a mean of acquiring divine wisdom, unnecessary will it be to point out the proper subjects of contemplation. If the mind be properly disposed, begin at any point in the circle of heavenly knowledge, and it will finally rest, where only it can rest with comfort,

fort, in the bosom of the Almighty. This is indeed devotion. This is to receive the Holy Spirit within us, and dispose him to guide us into all the truth.

But while I recommend meditation, carefully let the heart of the good Christian avoid the dangerous raptures of enthusiasm. In an immoderate indulgence of these feelings, the mind runs wild, and branches out into mazes of contemplation which end only in confusion. Christ and his apostles give no countenance to unreasonable fervours. All is calm and composed which we meet with in the scriptures; rational and steadily devout. There, we behold no inflation of mind, no unnatural extension of the faculties. The religion which is there taught is the religion of men, “full of
“mercy and good works, without partiality,
“and without hypocrisy.”

Neither should the hours of pious reflection be dedicated to the unravelling of the cobwebs of controversy. Pure and rational devotion lies at a great distance even from polemical discussions; vain and unprofitable will those moments be found,

which are appropriated solely to these purposes. Take the scriptures in their plainest sense. Discover there the will of God, displayed in the redemption of man, and be satisfied with such religious knowledge as may be extracted from these records of salvation. I mean not by this observation to check the ardour of study, or prevent a serious and impartial investigation of sacred subjects. I would only suggest, that men of learning ought not to think those hours devoted to religion, which are spent in vain contentions about words, or in attempting to be *wise above what is written*.

Religious meditation, though in its proper place with *sweet retired solitude*, will often find itself usefully employed even in the offices of public devotion. I know not that that is the most exceptionable part of the public worship of a particular sect, which is dedicated to *silent meetings*. And in our own church, where voluntaries upon the organ are introduced, the mind will often harmonize with the music, and the *concord of sweet sounds* will dispose the heart of the devout to elevated thoughts, and
sublime

sublimre conceptions. Such I have often experienced to be the fact when attending to instrumental music. Distinction of tune is frequently lost in the general harmony ; whilst the thoughts are not mechanically employed upon the sweeping strings, but are wandering abroad in quest of distant and agreeable objects.

But to produce this pleasing effect the performer should be attentive to the melody of his music. Solemn strains alone are suitable to the dignity of public worship. What impression these mark upon the mind, let Milton say.—

“ There let the pealing organ blow
“ To the full voic'd quire below,
“ In service high and anthems clear,
“ As may with sweetness through mine ear
“ Dissolve me into extasies,
“ And bring all heav'n before mine eyes.”

I shall long remember the solemnity of the pause in the ordination service of our church, when the congregation is desired *secretly in their prayers* to make their humble supplications to God to grant strength and power to the candidates for orders, to enable

them to perform the important office to which they are appointed : “ for the which “ prayers,” says the rubric, “ *there shall be silence kept for a space.*”

Every man must be sensible of the importance of religious *meditation* for the regulation of his conduct, and the general discharge of the duties of his life. Reflection tempered by religion will act like a guardian angel on his heart ; it will prepare his mind for every arduous undertaking ; it will remove a thousand impediments which would obstruct or retard his spiritual, as well as temporal, attainments ; it will sweeten his cares, and promote his pleasures ; it will gild the gay hours of youth with satisfaction, will smooth the pillow of declining years, and open a tranquil and easy passage to the world of spirits.

N° XXII.

On Prayer.

Easily may faith admit, that all
 The good which we enjoy, from heaven descends ;
 But that from us aught should ascend to heaven
 So prevalent as to concern the mind
 Of God high blest, or to incline his will,
 Hard to belief may seem ; yet this will pray'r,
 Or one short sigh of human breath, upborne
 Ev'n to the seat of God ! For since I sought
 By prayer th' offended Deity to' appease,
 Methought I saw him placable and mild,
 Bending his ear ! ———— Peace return'd
 Home to my breast.

MILTON.

IF religious meditation be acknowledged to be a powerful mean of grace, shall we not also, in obedience to the reason of man, and the will of our Creator, seek those blessings which are distributed from above, by another channel derived from the same source, even by the medium of *prayer* ? To subdue those irregular inclinations which are apt to se-

duce us from our duty, and to produce in our hearts an habitual and confirmed devotion to the Supreme Being, and a proper sense of our obligation to that Saviour who came to rescue us from misery and sin, we must apply to those remedies which the bounty of a kind Providence bestows upon us. To be able to open an immediate intercourse with heaven, appears to be as much above the sphere of humanity as any other miracle in nature. Yet even the heathens believed the possibility of this intercourse. But as heathens are not the objects of this meditation, I shall be allowed to assume it as part of the faith of the Christian, that the prayer which ascends to the throne of grace from an heart fully impressed with a sense of the divine goodness, and offered through the merits and mediation of Christ, will not fail to procure such an accession of graces and blessings, as will produce the completest peace of soul, and the most comfortable assurances of immortal happiness.

Many are the arguments which present themselves on the efficacy of prayer, many are

are the passages of scripture which assure us, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." To scripture indeed I would refer, as offering the purest motives for the performance of this duty. Our religion is a religion of faith; and if we have no doubts concerning the authenticity of our religion, we can have none concerning the efficacy of prayer. In the history of the Author of our religion, we frequently behold him moved by the fervency of his devotions. "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." His precepts too, enjoin this communication with heaven, which are enforced with this strong motive, peculiar to the religion which he taught, that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. When we thus reflect on prayer as a christian duty, this end will appear most desirable to our souls. It is to the sacred impression of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, to which we must look for that peace of mind which is to console us under a thousand troubles, and to anti-

cipate within our breast the happiness of heaven.

Who that has experienced the fervours of an animated devotion, but must know how superior such feelings are, to the cold and lifeless reasonings of mere philosophy! What warm emotions are excited by so near an approach to the divine presence! What pleasure, to lose oneself, as it were, in the contemplation of God's goodness! What gratitude and love to meditate on his mercies and deliverances! And when we reflect on these blessings as closely united with the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, how can we forget in every action of our lives to cement the holy union?

Were we truly sensible that "The Lord" "is in every place, beholding the evil and "the good," we should easily perceive that prayer is a rational and proper introduction to his presence, if we use it with sincerity, humility and faith. When these are the principles with which we pray, there can be no doubt but that the Spirit of God will rest upon us, and that the blessings arising from so earnest and sincere a supplication, will
fall

fall on our heads like the genial dews of heaven.

No man ever prayed with more fervour than David. "His psalms," as an amiable interpreter of them observes, "appear to " have been the manual of the Son of God " in the days of his flesh ;" and of himself he says that " he has never failed to experience the unspeakable benefit of them " both in public and private, and would " wish, if it so pleased God, that death " might find him employed in meditations " of this kind." The Psalms of David indeed are a rich treasury for a pious mind : and it is impossible to peruse them with an eye bent on *him* whom David represents, without feeling the force of every sentiment, and improving the natural disposition of the heart. •

As we pass through the vale of human life various are the sensations which we experience in our souls, as various as the circumstances from whence they spring. Sin and misery, too closely attached to the nature of man, produce dejection of spirits and

and contrition of heart. A sense of God's goodness, on the other hand, displayed both in the ways of providence and in the works of grace, excites, in the breast of the grateful man, the song of thankfulness and praise. Words never will be wanting to express these various impressions. If they are, let the devout supplicant turn to the hymns of David. "His invaluable Psalms," to resume the language of bishop Horne, "convey those comforts to others, which they afforded to himself, composed upon particular occasions, yet designed for general use; delivered out as services for Israelites under the law, yet no less adapted to the circumstances of Christians under the gospel; they present religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal; while history is made the vehicle of prophecy, and creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of redemption. Calculated alike to profit and to please, they inform the understanding,

“ standing, elevate the affections, and en-
“ tertain the imagination. Indited under
“ the influence of *him*, to whom all hearts
“ are known, and all events foreknown,
“ they suit mankind in all situations, grate-
“ ful as the manna which descended from
“ above, and conformed itself to every
“ palate *.”

Though in the hands of all, all do not peruse these pieces of devotion with the attention and application which they deserve. Though making part of the daily service of our church, as they formerly did, and still do, of that of the Jews, they are passed too slightly over ; and the spirit of fervour which animated David, too frequently fails in communicating its raptures to the languid heart of the cold reciter. Yet who, removed from present comfort, and looking forward to the consolations of heaven from the midst of trouble and anxiety, when he first opens his eyes in the dawn of the morning, does not sympathize with David in the parched deserts of Judah? does not adopt his fervid

* Horne's Comment. on the Psalms. Introduction.

language,

language, and exclaim,—“ O God, thou art
 “ my God, early will I seek thee ; my soul
 “ thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for
 “ thee in a dry and thirsty land where no
 “ water is : to see thy power and glory, so
 “ as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
 “ Because thy loving kindness is better than
 “ life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will
 “ I bless thee while I live ; I will lift up
 “ my hands in thy name. My soul shall
 “ be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ;
 “ and my mouth shall praise thee with joy-
 “ ful lips : when I remember thee upon my
 “ bed, and meditate on thee in the night
 “ watches. Because thou hast been my
 “ help, therefore under the shadow of thy
 “ wings will I rejoice.”—Psalm 63.

The devout man will endeavour to fulfil this indispensable duty in the very spirit of christianity ; he will consider it as a means of procuring for him tranquillity in this world, and happiness in the next. But he will not consider these blessings merely as the result of his own exertions ; he will not consider his *own* prayer as of itself sufficient to reach the throne of the divine majesty.

Too.

Too well is he read in the history of human nature, as recorded in the gospel, to offer so bold a petition. He knows that "God
" heareth not sinners, but if any man be
" a worshipper of God (in that sense which
" true christianity defines) and does his
" will, him he heareth." *One short sigh of human breath* will indeed reach *the seat of God*, but it must be *upborne* by the Son of God himself. The essence of christian worship is contained in this declaration of our Saviour—"Verily, verily, I say unto
" you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father
" *in my name*, he will give it you."

If there be any petition which we dare not ask of God in the name of his Son, be assured that that request is contrary to our duty; and if we desire even good things with an evil intent, we are guilty of an heinous offence; we convert our wholesome food to a deadly poison. But if we find our hearts disposed to apply to him for heavenly benefits, for such things as are intended for the general or particular good of mankind, or for the comfort and support of our own souls, then may we truly be said to "pray
" with

“ with the spirit, and to pray with the understanding also.” By thus attending to the matter of our prayers, as well as to the manner of them, we shall gradually be filled with that holy disposition which descends from above ; a disposition wholly under the influence of the divine Spirit, and the reward of the faithful worshipper.

N° XXIII.

On habitual Devotion.

Lowly they bow'd adoring, and began
Their orison, each morning duly paid
In various style.—

MILTON.

As there is no pleasure which the human mind can boast of, equal to that which arises from the practice of true christianity, so no exertion of the faculties of man should be more strong, than that which promotes so important an employment. We well know, that we may sigh after natural food as long and as heartily as we please, yet if we put not forth our hand, the fruit will remain unshaken from the tree, the luxuriant harvest will wither and decay in the midst of the valley. The same is true of every spiritual exertion. A kind Providence
has

has poured into our hearts an inclination to serve him. There are few, very few indeed, who will not acknowledge this inherent truth. But the indolence of some, and the seduction of others, render this disposition unproductive of good fruits; nay, in many instances, convert it to the worst and most malignant purposes. At our entrance into life the Spirit of God hovers over our head, it enters into our heart. If we cherish it by exertions of our own, it rests there as the spirit of consolation. If we reject it by possessing *an evil heart of unbelief*, it leaves us a prey to dangers from whence we shall not escape. “Know ye not that ye
 “are the temple of God, and that the
 “Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any
 “man defile the temple of God, him shall
 “God destroy: for the temple of God is
 “holy, which temple ye are.”

To endeavour to preserve this heavenly spirit, pure and unmixed with secular defilements, we should use every assistance which the providence of God hath kindly administered for this purpose. As man in his original formation is a creature of habit,
 it

it is to be supposed that virtuous inclinations and good actions may be introduced into human conduct, at least as easy as criminal indulgences. I speak not here of the corruption of our nature which is common to all; but place all mankind upon the same level, as far as respects the several duties which they owe to God, their neighbours, and themselves. The apostle, in an address to his Galatian converts, speaks in strong language of his own anxieties of mind, that the sacred doctrines of the Saviour which he preached might take possession of the heart, and become, as it were, a part of their existence—"My little children of whom I travail in birth again until *Christ be formed in you!*" How strong and forcible is the expression! This therefore should be the point, after which we should all aspire; that *Christ may be so formed in us*, that our religion may be so interwoven with every thought of our heart, and every action of our life, as to influence our conduct in every particular.

That we may rise to this important height, much labour will be required; for without
labour

labour nothing can be accomplished. Even the spirit of God will not rest upon an unsoliciting heart. "We must rise up early" and late take rest, and eat the bread," if not "of carefulness," yet of permanent and habitual devotion. Two important steps to this elevation of mind, as I have endeavoured to shew, are religious meditation and prayer. But even these, though at all times necessary, are only preparatory to that holiness of life and conversation, which Christ expects from all his disciples: a life, not raised *above* humanity, but plain, sober and discreet; a conversation, not irrational or enthusiastic, but good, pious and devout.

The meditating Christian is not required to retreat further from the world than may be sufficient to collect the powers of his imagination, and restrain the irregularities of his heart. Though directed by a positive precept to *pray always*, he considers the spirit rather than the letter of the injunction; and therefore is not driven from the true uses of life to a monastic seclusion. He well knows that it is not the repetition of many prayers, but an inward and un-

affected devotion of the mind to God, an habitual-impression of the divine goodness on the soul, which must convey his aspirations to heaven. He looks upon the creation; and exclaims, "These are thy works, Parent of good! Almighty!" He views the wonders of redemption displayed in the scriptures of truth; and adopts the enraptured language of St. Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Fortified with holy thoughts he walks abroad into the world; wherever he turns his eyes he beholds an object of instruction; and, if I may be allowed to use the words of a moral writer after language of such high authority,

" Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

" Sermons in stones, and good in ev'ry thing."

Accustomed to meditate on the several passages of human life, every emotion of his mind is an habitual prayer. And thus he subdues those passions to which his nature is subject, and prepares his soul for a more perfect state of existence.

Prayer

Prayer to God through the mediation of Christ, is one of the more immediate means of grace, as we are assured by holy writ, and as every good man's experience must convince him: it is a duty therefore to which a Christian should address himself with more than ordinary application. The words to be used in prayer are best selected by the petitioner himself. A most excellent model he cannot want, if he takes for his guide the liturgy of the church of England. But as the heart of man is languid, and alas! too frequently indisposed to pray, let him previously collect his scattered thoughts, and seriously meditate not only on his wants, but by whom, and for whose sake he has reason to hope that those wants will be supplied; and then, it is likely, he will not speak unadvisedly with his lips. "Before thou prayest prepare thyself, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord." A rash, or a careless, or an inconsiderate suppliant, is an absurdity in nature; nay, he is worse, he draws down a curse and not a blessing; and when such is "judged, he
" will

“ will be condemned, and his prayer will become sin.”

As we are best acquainted with our own infirmities, we shall, perhaps, find it a good practice to use variety in our prayers. Not that in God is to be found any *variableness or shadow of turning*, but that we may be able to accommodate our expressions to our various wants, and to the predominant disposition of our mind. Sometimes a sense of guilt presses down the soul; sometimes the hope of mercy elevates the heart. At one time, perhaps, we are inclined to mourn like a dove; at another, we “take a psalm, “bring forth the tabret, the merry harp, or “the lute.” Sometimes we may address our heavenly Parent in a pre-conceived form of words; and sometimes the heart may break its chain, and fly to the throne of grace on the wing of ardent and spontaneous effusions. “While I was thus “musing,” says David, “the fire [of devotion] kindled, and at last I spake with “my tongue.” Thus Milton represents our first parents, as paying the duty of adoration

- “ *In various style; for neither various style*
- “ *Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise*
- “ *Their Maker in fit strains pronounced, or sung*
- “ *Unmeditated.*”—

To private prayer alone, selected or unmeditated, should this variety be confined. Public worship should be conducted upon a different principle. I would not even introduce it into the offices of family devotion; which I consider as an indispensable duty in the dwelling of a Christian. As no man can profess himself a member of any religious society, without an open association with it, so no man can, with propriety, call himself a member of the general church of Christ, without endeavouring to instruct that small community in the midst of which he is placed; and unite in prayer, with his immediate friends, relatives, and servants, to that God who maketh those to be of one mind who dwell in one house.

This is a branch of habitual devotion carefully to be attended to, the blessing of heaven will descend upon the pious circle, and “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*” will rest upon their hearts:—“blessed shall

“ be

‘ be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit
 “ of thy ground—blessed shall be thy
 “ basket, and thy store—blessed shalt thou
 “ be when thou comest in, and blessed
 “ shalt thou be when thou goest out.”—If
 you wish to behold a family of love, good
 parents, good children, good servants, con-
 vene them *daily* in the more immediate pre-
 sence of God; shew them, in the ritual of
 prayer, the relative duties of human life;
 teach them the virtues and graces of a
 Christian in the devotions of a Christian;
 display the motives by which the love of
 God descends upon their heads—then no
 arguments will be necessary to recommend
 the practice of domestic religion.

As example is always more interesting
 than precept, I shall conclude with the
 character of an eminent religious physician,
 drawn by the luminous pen of a christian
 philosopher *. I venture to address, on this
 occasion, gentlemen of the same profession;
 a profession which brings before the eye the
 most humiliating instances of human infir-

*. Life of Boerhaave, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D.

mity, and ought to produce in the heart those sentiments of devotion, which the practice of the art of medicine is so well calculated to excite. “ Honour the physician with the honour due to him.”— “ Give place to the physician, the Lord created him.”

“ The piety of Boerhaave, and a religious sense of his dependance on God, was the basis of all his virtues, and the principle of his whole conduct. He was too sensible of his weakness to ascribe any thing to himself, or to conceive that he could subdue passion, or withstand temptation, by his own natural power; he attributed every good thought, and every laudable action, to the Father of goodness. Being once asked by a friend, who had often admired his patience under great provocations, whether he knew what it was to be angry, and by what means he had so entirely suppressed that impetuous and ungovernable passion? he answered, with the utmost frankness and sincerity, that he was naturally quick of resentment, but that he had by *daily prayer and meditation,*

“ tion, at length attained to this mastery
“ over himself.

“ As soon as he rose in the morning, it
“ was, throughout his whole life, *his daily*
“ *practice to retire for an hour to private*
“ *prayer and meditation*; this, he often told
“ his friends, gave him spirit and vigour in
“ the business of the day, and this he there-
“ fore commended as the best rule of life;
“ for nothing he knew could support the
“ soul in all distresses but a confidence in
“ a Supreme Being, nor can a steady and
“ rational magnanimity flow from any other
“ source than a consciousness of the divine
“ favour.

“ He asserted on all occasions the divine
“ authority, and sacred efficacy of the Holy
“ Scriptures; and maintained that they
“ alone taught the way of salvation, and
“ that they only could give peace of mind.
“ The excellency of the christian religion
“ was the frequent subject of his conversa-
“ tion. A strict obedience to the doctrine,
“ and a diligent imitation of the example
“ of our blessed Saviour, he often declared
“ to be the foundation of true tranquillity.

“ Such were the sentiments of Boerhaave.
“ So far was this man from being made
“ impious by philosophy, or vain by know-
“ ledge, or by virtue, that he ascribed all
“ his abilities to the bounty, and all his
“ goodness to the grace of God. May his
“ example extend its influence to his ad-
“ mirers and followers! May those who
“ study his writings imitate his life! and
“ those who endeavour after his knowledge
“ aspire likewise to his piety.”

N° XXIV.

*On the Redemption of Man, commemorated
in the Lord's Supper.*

— nail'd to the cross
By his own nation, slain for bringing life.

MILTON.

If christianity have any claim of preference above every other institution in the world, the advocate for infidelity may say, "*produce your cause, bring forth your strong reasons.*" In the gospel of Christ an important cause has been produced, and the strongest reasons offered to the consideration of mankind. Jesus Christ came, neither in the habit, nor the manner, of an ancient philosopher, and he differs as much from one of modern days, as any other discordant appearance in nature. Every thing was *peculiar* in the character of Christ; and in this peculiarity consists the super-
L 4 eminent

eminent excellency of his religion. I do not say that it is excellent *because* it is peculiar; but as it transcends every former system of belief, that alone excepted which was connected with it from the æra of the fall of man, and foretold its promulgation—but as it rises above the moral lessons of every preceding age, and presents motives of conduct totally unsuspected by the wisest head, altogether inconceivable by the purest unregenerated heart.

The diffusion of grace was the object of our Saviour's mission, and by this to save alive those souls which should believe in him. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." This faith is not a fruitless unproductive principle; it is not a mere assent of the imagination; but, on the contrary, it is replete with every active virtue: "for," as the apostle proceeds, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

The means used by the gospel to diffuse the graces which it bestows, are within the reach of every believer. No man indeed
can

can command the operations of the Spirit ; but every man by prayer, religious meditation, habitual devotion, hearing and reading the word of God, and a diligent attention to all the duties which the word of God requires, will perceive the influence of the divine Spirit, and be satisfied : “ that God hath visited and redeemed his “ people.”

This redemption it is, which gives an efficacy to every branch of christian virtue. In the times when the gospel was first preached, it was a custom (I would to God that I could add *now abolished!*) to buy and sell slaves. To that state we are often compared when confined under the bondage of sin. Our reconciliation with God therefore is often considered in scripture as effected by the way of *redemption*. When we were lost in trespasses and sins, and estranged from God, he purchased us again by his Son.

And was the ransom paid? It was: and paid!
(What can exalt the bounty more) for *you*.

YOUNG.

The purchaser of a slave expected service from him. The *redeemed of the Lord* owe the same service. If we do not pay it with alacrity and diligence our redemption is imperfect, we cannot but expect to be sent back again to our original possessor. "Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

The commemoration of this redemption by a participation of the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a powerful mean of communicating grace by the particular appointment of Christ himself. The two sacraments of our church are to be considered as badges or tokens of our profession, since by them Christians are visibly distinguished from Atheists, Deists, Heathens, Jews, and Mahometants. So many excellent treatises have been written on this subject, that I refer to them for a more copious account of the nature and end of these christian institutions. But while I am considering the various means by which God conveys his spiritual blessings to the world, I cannot omit

omit recommending that holy ordinance which offers itself to the wants, to the piety, to the affections of mankind.

That we all want, what is there offered, pardon of sins and reconciliation with our God, none of us, but the most presumptuous, can deny : that the practice of piety will dispose us to an humble reception of God's favours, must be universally allowed : and that all the tender affections of our mind are roused and agitated when we behold the pure and spotless Jesus "*nailed to the cross, and slain for bringing life,*" is a truth notorious to every feeling heart. A bare spectator of so melancholy a scene could not unmoved behold it. But when we reflect that this event took place in consequence of the universal defection of the human race, and that their restoration to the divine favour depended upon its completion ; when we consider that there is no exception to this observation, but that all the world are in a greater or less degree the servants of sin, that the hand which writes this, and the eye which reads it, have internal evidence of this truth, we are struck

L 6.

with

with the magnitude and importance of the sacrifice.

To regain the favour of God is the great object of the Christian's life : and therefore he endeavours, by every means in his power, to procure a participation in the blessings of the gospel. To frequent the Lord's table he finds an indispensable duty ; for in so doing, he complies with the positive injunction of the Author of his religion, and the acknowledged practice of the church of Christ in every age. He approaches it, however, without superstition, and without presumption. He neither exalts it, with some, into an object of adoration, nor depresses it, with others, into a cold unmeaning ceremony. He is not prevented from participating, by the fear of sharing the fate of Uzza when he touched the ark : neither does he rush towards it as to a cursory act of devotion, in which neither his heart, nor his affections, are concerned. But he considers this sacred ordinance, as our Lord himself and his apostles represent it, as the *channel of divine grace*. " The cup of blessing which we
" bless,

“ bless, is it not the communion [the com
“ munication to you] of the blood of
“ Christ? The bread which we break, is
“ it not the communion of the body of
“ Christ?”

What the graces and blessings are which are communicated by this sacrament, it is unnecessary to enumerate: they are deeply imprinted in the good man's heart; the effects of them are visible in the good man's life. Such a renovation of mind, such a *strengthening and refreshing of our souls* as we experience on these occasions, is peculiar to that happy system of religion which we possess.

In the execution of this act there is no obscurity. The ordinance is plain, the effects certain, and, I may add, the neglect of it dangerous. An attentive perusal of the office of our church appointed for the celebration of this sacrament, will be our best instruction, and a good life our best preparation for it. The service is solemn and affecting; it touches the feelings and improves the heart. By this we declare our confidence in Christ's merits, our belief

belief in his mission, and our adherence to his religion. By this our confidence is increased, our belief confirmed, and our adherence established, not only by an accession of pious thoughts and holy resolutions, but by the extraordinary influence of those divine blessings annexed to the performance of a duty, appointed and recommended by *him*, in whose

————— face

Divine compassion visibly appears,

Love without end, and without measure grace.

MILTON.

As we are at every period of our lives in want of the distinguishing graces of christianity, no criminal negligence on our part should prevent their operation. If we are indeed believers in Christ, let our faith be productive of those good fruits, which Christ alone delivers. Does he point out methods of conveying to us the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit? and dare we *dash the untasted moisture from us*? This conduct is unworthy of the sacred name we bear. It is for this, and such as this, that blessings are withheld from us.

For this cause merited punishment is allotted to us ; for this we are assailed with wars and rumours of wars ; for this public faction stalks abroad, and private misery abounds—
“ for this cause, many are weak and sickly
“ among you, and many sleep.”

If we make this use of the agitation of the world in general, as well as of our own individual offences, we shall find it operate as a genial balm. All the doctrines of the gospel are of an healing nature. They probe the wound, 'tis true, but they effect a cure. The bread of life and the cup of blessing are too precious to be rejected. Let us then put forth our hand and take of the fruit of that sacramental tree which stands in the midst of the garden of God, and we shall eat and live for ever.

N° XXV.



On Books of Piety.

Ah! yet ere I descend the grave,
 May I a small house and large garden have!
 And a few friends, and *many books*, both true,
 Both wise, and both delightful too!

COWLEY'S WISH.

IN enumerating the blessings of retirement, it will not be thought extraordinary, that *many books* should be added to the agreeable catalogue of comforts. Friends are not excluded, because the soul of the good man is most susceptible of the consolations of friendship; and books, those *silent friends*, are admitted, to improve those hours which are dedicated to peace and tranquillity. I mean not to decide the controverted point, whether happiness be more complete amidst the *busy hum of men*, or in that calm retreat where every one
doth

doth live his own. I may be allowed, however, to subscribe to the sentiment of the poet without dictating to the opinion of others.

The tide of life, swift always in its course,
May run in cities with a brisker force,
But no where with a current so serene,
Or half so clear, as in the rural scene.

COWPER.

But as man is not formed for one purpose only of society, he must mix in various situations. His mind and his habit must accommodate themselves to that useful occupation which Providence assigns him; yet even in the most busy scenes of life he will find it an indispensable duty to form a temporary retirement for himself, lest the continued hurry of living should indispose him for the performance of those higher obligations which he owes to heaven. And after all, it must be remembered, that it is not the situation, but the proper enjoyment of the situation, which produces comfort. If friends and books are introduced into the sequestered cot or fragrant garden 'midst

“Zephyr’s

“ Zephyr’s wholesome breath,
 “ And sighs embalmed, which new-born flowers unfold *,”

they must, as Cowley says, be *both wise and both delightful*. The same must be the choice, if the selection be made in towns, “ where merchants most do congregate.”

It is true that we are most subject to the intrusion of vice in populous situations, but solitude is not without its dangers.

“ As it is with freedom,” says a modern writer, “ so it is with solitude: it ennobles
 “ none but the noble; it increases the vice
 “ of the vicious. Tiberius resigned himself
 “ in his solitude to his lusts, and his
 “ misanthropy †.”

It becomes us, therefore, to guard in *every state*, by the most obvious and important means, against the dangers peculiar to it. It becomes us also to fill up our department in life in the most acceptable manner; which cannot be done without the assistance promised in the gospel. It has been the object of these meditations to

* Drummond of Hawthornden.

† Baron Stolberg’s Trav. Vol. II. p. 25.

enforce

enforce this truth. Moral conduct, independent of the gospel, has no stable foundation. Moral writings are in the same situation. They may, it is true, help to civilize the human heart, but unless the motives of revelation complete the study, it will not bring forth the plentiful fruits of righteousness.

Far be it from me to depreciate the channels of knowledge. On the contrary, every branch of useful learning deserves encouragement; inasmuch as it is a part of that wide overspreading tree "whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." The further we extend rational service, the more we promote the ends of our creation; and the deeper we penetrate into the mine of wisdom, the more valuable are the treasures we discover. It is the superficial philosopher only, who looks not on the world with a microscopic eye. He is contented with viewing the surface, whilst the diamond lies far beneath. The reasonings of the modern sceptic may make disciples of an interested few—alas! his influence may, and has, extended over many—but it is

is an eternal truth, that the revelation of the gospel rises triumphant over all his reasonings. New arguments are discovered, new proofs produced; if those may be called *new* which have only been concealed for want of inquiry.

Among other objects of attack from this quarter, books of piety and religion, those instructors of the ignorant, and solace of the miserable, come in for no inconsiderable share. “Books,” says a modern philosopher of this school, (and he speaks only the language of the Voltaires, D’Alemberts, and Diderots of the day) “have been handed down from generation to generation as the true teachers of piety and the love of God, that represent him as so merciless and tyrannical a despot, that if they were considered otherwise than through the medium of prejudice, they would inspire nothing but hatred*.”

This general censure of books of piety ought to have truth for its foundation; or else they are—*verba et præterea nihil*. Whether it

* Godwin’s Enquirer, p. 135.

glances at the best of books, I pretend not to determine. If it does not, it ought to have made this exception; for if all other books were extinct, this would supply the fountain of knowledge, and make us *wise unto salvation*. If it reflects only on some misguided melancholy minds, it is equally undeserving of a reply; for there is no profession of science, much less of religion, where some eccentric artist, some ignorant enthusiast, will not broach doctrines, which could not meet the approbation of men of deeper research in the arts, men of sounder faith in theology.

If the caviller will inquire, he will find that the object of books of practical religion is to improve the moral faculties of men, and to give them happiness both here and hereafter, by means of a revelation perfect and complete in all its parts, sanctioned by divine favour, and offered equally to all— as well to him who was born yesterday, as to him who shall be born at the distance of a thousand years, if the world should so long continue. He will find also, that pure religion by no means represents

represents the Supreme Being as “ a merciless and tyrannical despot.” On the contrary, the scripture every where reveals him under this awful and engaging description—“ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that he will by no means clear the guilty*.” It is the last clause which occasions all the censure. So long as a man continues *guilty*, he has indeed no claim to mercy; but our benevolent revelation proceeds further, and informs us, that “ God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us†:”—“ blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross ‡.”

Such is the account which the gospel gives of the administration of divine Providence in its dealings with mankind.

* Ex. xxxiv. 6.

† Rom. v. 8.

‡ Col. ii. 14.

Such

Such is the account which numerous books of piety give of the same transactions. If we are at any time tempted to think the doctrines which they inculcate severe, let us examine our own hearts, and we shall soon see on which side the prejudice lies. But if, instead of scrutinizing our actions, and intentions, instead of inquiring what the *will of the Lord is*, we continue in the crooked paths of error, paths which incontestably always lead to vice, it will not be thought surprising if our evil habits gain every day fresh strength, and, like the arch-apostate in Milton, we approach the God of mercy only to tell him, how we *hate his beams*.

In our language, and conformable to the profession of religion in the church of England, there are many excellent assistances to our private meditations. The latter end of the seventeenth century, and the beginning of the eighteenth, produced several of this description. The fanatical compositions of the commonwealth, succeeded by the immoralities of king Charles the second's reign, excited the devotion of many learned and pious men: and, thanks
to

to their labours ! under the providence of God, their works still edify the church. But the progress of letters, in the course of the last century, rendered something more necessary to arrest the attention of a more polished age ; and the country has been enriched, though perhaps not in the same strain of plain unaffected piety, but by the publication of many excellent discourses from the pulpit. In some instances, it may be, a tame morality has been inculcated, instead of the abundant doctrines of the gospel. This has been more the error of the times than of the preacher ; who, in endeavouring to avoid the exuberance of gospel expressions, rendered suspicious by the use which was made of them under the administration of Cromwell, fell into the opposite extreme, and did not discern the rational piety to be met with in the writings of the first reformers.

However excellent *ancient books* may be, they will not be generally received, because they differ in form and manner from those in present use. Let it not, therefore, be an object of censure that old truths are repeated

peated in new language. The constitution of the world requires that it should be so. And while we peruse the writings of a Porteus, a Wilberforce, a Gisborne, &c. we shall be satisfied that the present age does not want strenuous supporters of the religion of Christ, who have expressed themselves either in an elegance of style adapted to the refinements of an improved state of literature, or with a strength of words well calculated to enforce the importance of the subject.

When the interests of religion are properly discussed, it will be found that they are as far as possible from gloomy apprehensions or morbid melancholy. Wit and learning, cheerfulness and good humour, ought all to be the associates of pure christianity. In many instances we have seen them connected: in some, constitutional terrors too much encroached upon a sense of duty. Addison is an instance of the one, Johnson of the other; yet both contributed highly, by their lives and writings, to the improvement of piety. I shall use the language of the latter when he discusses

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the merits of the former, and beg to be understood as applying the expressions equally to both. The latter part of the sentence is, in my mind, a true description of what a book of piety ought to be.—“ Addison not
 “ only made the proper use of wit himself,
 “ but taught it to others; and from his
 “ time it has been generally subservient to
 “ the cause of reason and of truth. He
 “ has dissipated the prejudice which had
 “ long connected gaiety with vice, and
 “ easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its
 “ dignity, and taught innocence not to be
 “ ashamed. This is an elevation of literary
 “ character, “ above all Greek, above all
 “ Roman fame.” No greater felicity can
 “ genius attain than that of having purified
 “ intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from
 “ indecency, and wit from licentiousness;
 “ of having taught a succession of writers,
 “ to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid
 “ of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having *turned*
 “ *many to righteousness* *.”

* Johnson's Life of Addison.

N° XXVI.

N° XXVI.

On religious Friendship.

Of friendship's fairest fruits, the fruit most fair
Is *virtue*—.

YOUNG.

IN the voyage of life, every proper accommodation is afforded us by a kind Providence, to protect us in so perilous a passage. However fertile we may be in resources, however guarded against dangers, however fortified against calamities, we are liable to be assailed from unexpected quarters, and it is impossible for us to be acquainted with the certainty of our safety. In this critical situation we call aloud for help: and help is near us in a variety of shapes. We are in the hands of a merciful preserver; and though he does not always work a miracle for our security (if that alone may be called

a miracle which is superior to the general and known laws of nature) yet he continually administers to our comfort by exciting the humane affections of mankind.

Under the name of friendship many heroic actions have been performed. The records of heathen antiquity are full of them; and even in the modern history of the world some instances occur of dangerous "*hair-breadth 'scapes*," in the service of this deity. At present I mean not to court her smiles. Though the principle from whence friendship proceeds be allowed to be both amiable and virtuous, yet if it so far deviate from the ordinary course of nature as to attach itself solely to one object, and with the enthusiasm of romance to endeavour to accomplish that alone, we may venture to suspect that it is not to be found among the fruits of the Spirit, where meekness, gentleness, and joy preside.

Having beheld the fervours of heroic friendship, let us turn our eyes on that amiable affection of the mind which is tempered by the religion of Christ. An objection indeed may be made, that the profession

sion of private friendship, or, as it may be called, of exclusive esteem, so warmly delineated by the pen of the moralist, is contrary to that *universal* love inculcated by our *universal* Redeemer. To this the elegant allusion of bishop Porteus will be a sufficient answer. “ Within the wide circumference
“ of christian charity,” he says, “ we are
“ allowed to form as many smaller circles
“ of benevolence as we please. It requires
“ only that our affections should move in
“ them under the controul of that sovereign
“ law of universal love, which, like the
“ great principle of attraction in the mate-
“ rial world, is diffused throughout our
“ moral system, to guide, direct, and regu-
“ late the whole, and to restrain, within
“ proper limits, every subordinate sentiment,
“ and inferior movement of the soul*.”
“ When this regulation of the affection rises
to the view, it brings with it all the benefits
which it was intended to produce. With
an eye of kindness bent on all, it turns to

* Bishop of London's Disc. Vol. I. S. 18.

one individual bosom for repose. The relative duties here acquire consistency and strength. The husband looks kindly on his selected partner, and their mutual feelings yearn upon their children. The reasoning youth finds within his parent's arms, his joyful, his well-accustomed shelter. The mature descendants of virtuous ancestors unite in all the happiness of fraternal love. Joy and sorrow are equally distributed around the circle, whilst mutual pleasure and delight sparkle in the eye and animate the breast :

Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft ;
Each others pillow to repose divine.

YOUNG.

But what is the link which connects this pleasing chain of beings? What is the electric spark which runs along it, and at the same moment warms every bosom? Is it the secret charm of natural affection springing from congenial breasts? It is,—but it is something more; it is nature cleansed from all her feculence; it is nature refined by religion. The revelation of Christ makes no
except-

exceptions in our love of men. On the contrary, they are directed to love one another on motives unknown to every former age; and for this reason, the precept which enjoins it, is called a *new commandment*. When, therefore, we find that so amiable a principle becomes a characteristic duty of the religion of Christ, does it not impel us still more to unite our fortunes and our happiness with those on whom our eyes first opened at our entrance into life, or those, by whose friendly intercourse we first discovered the meltings of humanity?

When we reflect on this sacred origin of friendship, shall we hesitate to pronounce that it springs from religion, and that *its fairest fruit is virtue*? “ Though not, perhaps, itself a virtue, yet it is something so *very like* a virtue, that no one who has ever tasted the genuine satisfaction it affords, can willingly consent to part with it *.”

To descant on brotherly love, according to the principles of the gospel, would be

* Bishop of London's Disc. Vol. I. S. 18.

only to recite what every Christian knows. Study our Lord's character, and you will behold it realized. It is the neglect of this study which tends to destroy the practice of all religion, and renders man a barbarian.

The professor of christianity, while the gospel lies open before his eyes, is in no want of an instructor. If he reads faithfully, what is written, he will find a friend both here and hereafter. Amongst his earthly connections it is hard if he possesses not one confidential bosom. If that should unfortunately be the case, he is directed where to apply for the tender care of one, who will "never leave him nor forsake him; who is a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat."—"Come unto me," says our Saviour, "all ye that travel, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"Ye are my *friends*," he adds, "if ye do whatsoever I command you."

The terms of religious friendship are here displayed; and he who is without a friend, must be first without a God, without a Saviour,

Saviour, without an heart-inspiring Comforter; a situation in the highest degree dreadful and deplorable. But our merciful and kind Creator never designed so hopeless a state for the children of men. He cheers them under every difficulty, and if they do not wilfully degrade themselves, "he will
" guide them with his counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory."

A good Christian, in every condition of human life, must be a faithful friend; the reason is, because this affection of his heart is founded upon principle. He considers Christ as the head, and mankind as the members of his body. The allusion is St. Paul's, to shew the intimate connection which ought to subsist among members of the same communion. "We being many," he says, "are one body in Christ, and
" every one members one of another." He looks upon every human creature, therefore, as bearing the image of God, and, on that account, entitled to his most cordial affection. He knows the extent of that love which brought Christ from heaven, and endeavours, by every friendly action,

to repay it, however inferior in degree, to all his fellow men. “ Beloved, if God so
“ loved us (in sending his only begotten
“ Son into the world that we might live
“ through him) we ought also to love one
“ another.” This then may be allowed to be a delineation of religious friendship; as superior to, and as different from, that which animated a Pylades, or an Orestes, as a christian grace surpasses a momentary impulse of heroic virtue.

Wherever compassion can be shewn, there the attention of the Christian is at hand; but mark! it is not for pity's sake only that he lends his assistance, for that, considered in itself, is often merely a selfish and insufficient motive; but for the sake of that Saviour who is his greatest, his best, and, through the goodness of God, who sent him into the world, his only benefactor. Here is a settled principle of true compassion. It fluctuates not with temper, it subsides not through want, or through fatigue. Like a profluent stream it is always full, and always ready to enrich the country through which it flows. “ The poor,” says our
Lord,

Lord, "ye have always with you." But there are others besides the poor to whom friendship of this kind is valuable. Some are in want of protection, others of advice; some want health, and others comfort; some are the servants of despair, and others the slaves of sin. Religious friendship endeavours to relieve them all.

Though every human being is the object of a Christian's love, I would consider his professional friendship as his first concern; that is, under whatever description of men, in other respects, he may be found, he should strictly support the character he bears as a follower of Christ. With this impression, it becomes his duty to make those sensible of the obligations of a Christian in discharging the offices of their station, with whom he may happen to be connected in secular concerns. As a father, son, or brother, he will have many opportunities of accomplishing this important point, and wherever he is able to succeed, he will find the bond of intercourse drawn still closer by the strong motives of religion. If he

step beyond the bounds of kindred or connection, he will find the same advantages in the cultivation of this holy league. Though he love all men, and would gladly communicate to them every blessing he enjoys, he loves those most who are worshippers of the same God, believers in the same redemption. The apostle allows and sanctions this distinction—"as we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

In domestic life, the effects of this conduct are obvious and important. A religious concern for the welfare of a family is attended with the best of consequences. In worldly affairs, he who provides not, by his own care and industry, for the support of his relatives in general, where it is in his power to do so, as well as of his own house or family in particular, is declared, by high authority, to be, in that respect, *worse than an infidel*. And surely a proper provision for their spiritual wants is of still greater importance. "The unbelieving husband is

“ is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.
“ For what knowest thou, O wife ! if thou shalt save thy husband ? Or how knowest thou, O man ! whether thou shalt save thy wife ! ”

It will not be doubted, from these considerations, but that religious friendship is a powerful mean, in the hand of Providence, to meliorate the condition of men, and humanize the world. The passions and affections are here united in the service of virtue and religion. With a perpetual bias to succour and relieve distress in every shape and under every clime, they cling still closer to those bosoms pointed out by nature, or adoption, as the first fruits of their care.

Reason as we will, this distinction will be always made. The good pastor will love his own flock in the first degree, the good parent his own child, and the good master will bestow his chief care on his own dependents. If we make this use of this amiable affection of the mind, it will soon

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run through every branch of human society, and accomplish that reformation of manners, that general disposition to virtue and religion, which has been so often wished for, and so seldom found.

N° XXVII.

On the Love of our Enemies.

Learn from yon orient shell to love thy foe,
And store with pearls the hand that brings thee woe :
Free, like yon rock, from base vindictive pride,
Imblaze with gems the wrist that rends thy side ;
Mark where yon tree rewards the stony show'r,
With fruit nectareous, or the balmy flower :
All nature calls aloud : " Shall man do-less
" Than heal the smiter, and the railer bless ?"

HAFIZ. SIR WM. JONES'S TRANS.

TO diffuse happiness is the object of christianity. As this great principle of our religion is universal, universal should be its effects. Every passion and affection of the mind, we have seen, pressed into its service. The exercise of virtue is an evident consequence of the operation of the divine Spirit, and the greater lengths we proceed in this road, the greater are our convictions that we are *taught of God*. Some sacrifice we must make to accomplish this important point,

- point, and we cannot part with any thing with greater ease, than those sins which are our chief obstructions in the school of virtue.

The offences which most easily beset us are those which corrupt nature cherishes in opposition to our neighbour. To counteract these malignant feelings, christianity offers a powerful antidote in the venerable and attractive form of *charity*. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." If we receive this genial spirit into our breast, we at once perceive the *internal evidence* of our religion, which is known or felt by the transforming power which it produces on the will and affections. It never fails to direct its happy influence to the inmost recesses of the heart; it leads us, in every instance, to look upon our fellow-creatures with complacency, to sooth their sorrows, to heal their wounds, to relieve their distresses; it shrinks from the thought that there is one amongst the millions of mankind whom we dare not bid, God speed! it is as ready not to offend, as to forgive when an offence has been committed.

After

After having reflected on the advantages which would accrue to mankind if they would unite themselves in bonds of religious friendship, let us bestow a little further reflection, and we shall find that our duty takes a larger range, and directs us not to confine our kindness to our friends alone, but to extend it to those whom we have unfortunately been obliged to call *our enemies*.

“If ye love them which love you,” says our Saviour, “what reward have ye?—If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?” The religion of the gospel requires a great deal more. However irksome it may be to the natural man to break through prejudices which have been long and deeply established, the spiritual man should strive to conquer. This is the great proof of his sincerity, the test of his religious principles. “*By this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples,” says Christ. “Be ye therefore perfect,” he adds, alluding to this important conquest, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” God is kind and merciful, though he is assaulted daily by the most implacable enemies:

enemies: be ye kind and merciful in imitation of him, and as he forgives you, *so also do ye.*

Whether the precept of *loving our enemies* be an original doctrine of christianity, is a matter of small importance, if christianity adopt the precept, and recommend it on motives peculiar to itself. The Mosaic law undoubtedly understood it; for though it says, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” this can only be considered as a proverbial expression to denote, in certain cases, the execution of strict and impartial justice. The law-giver of the Jews expressly says—“thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart—thou shalt not avenge or bear grudge against the children of thy people *.”—“If thou meet thine *enemy's* ox, or his ass, going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again †.”

So amiable and excellent an injunction, it is likely, our Lord would enforce in his admirable discourse from the mount. He did so, in the most striking manner; and

* Lev. xix. 17, 18.

† Exodus xxiii. 4.

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he had a further reason in doing it, as it had been falsely interpreted by the Pharisees, and, perhaps, totally neglected by the great body of the Jewish people. It is for this cause that he opposes his own expressions to those which they had been accustomed to hear. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, &c. But *I say unto you*, Love your enemies." If any could command the precept with more than ordinary emphasis, it was Christ. We were his enemies when he died for us. If any may be expected to obey this precept above the rest of mankind, they are Christians: for we are forgiven our offences through the propitiatory sacrifice of him, whom we have so often and so grievously offended.

When the antiquity of this precept is considered, as well as the sacred fount from whence it flowed, it will be no matter of triumph to the adversaries of revelation, that it has been discovered in the ancient poems of oriental writers. "The beautiful A ry'a couplet," says Sir William Jones, [Dis. II.] * "written at least three cen-

* Asiatic Researches, Vol. IV.

" turies

“ turies before our era, pronounces the duty
 “ of a good man, even in the moment of
 “ his destruction, to consist *not only* in
 “ *forgiving, but even in a desire of benefiting,*
 “ *his destroyer, as the sandal tree in the*
 “ *instant of its overthrow, sheds perfume on*
 “ *the ax which fells it ;* and the verse of
 “ Sadi represents a return of *good for good*
 “ *as a slight reciprocity,* but says to the
 “ virtuous man, *confer benefits on him who*
 “ *has injured thee,* using an Arabic sen-
 “ tence, and a maxim apparently of the
 “ ancient Arabs. Hafiz has illustrated that
 “ maxim with fanciful, but elegant allu-
 “ sions,” which I have prefixed to this me-
 ditation.

I fear, by every one of us, the command
 to love our enemies has been thought an
hard precept. But it should be remembered
 that to *have enemies* is our fault. I mean
 not to say, that in the chaos of interests
 with which the world abounds, it is possible
 to be the object of universal good-will, or
 even to be without enemies. Alas ! no man
 can expect it. But we should be careful,
 lest the enmity which has been once ex-
 cited,

cited, should be continued on our account. This is, indeed, a grievous offence: an offence, which, in all public or private quarrels, deservedly meets with reprobation. That it is contrary to general or individual happiness, will soon be found; that it is contrary to religion, is seriously and fatally true.

- As men, we are loudly called upon, to love one another. "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" The heart of the good man feels warm towards *all* the human race: and if any breast is so savage as to return evil for good, like the Saviour who redeemed *all*, he says, "Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

This argument might be branched out to an almost interminable length, but the importance of the precept, renders the discussion frequent; and however different may be the practice of the world, few there are who are enemies to the principle. It is needless to say, that in this case, obedience is the very spirit of religion. Thus St. Paul both describes and recommends this effect
of

of christianity: “put on, therefore, *as the*
“ elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of
“ mercy, kindness, meekness, long-suffer-
“ ing, forbearing one another, and forgiving
“ one another, if any man hath a quarrel
“ against any; even as Christ forgave you,
“ so also do ye.”

In every instance implacable enmity meets with our steady and unqualified condemnation. But there are two cases which stand forward with daring fronts, and present themselves as the most guilty enemies of peace: I mean domestic and political quarrels.

I. As a greater degree of kindness may reasonably be expected from a near and dear relative, or a bosom friend, than from a stranger, so the offence of the former strikes the breast with sharper pangs. “It was
“ not an enemy,” says David, *“ that re-*
“ proached me, then I could have borne
“ it; but it was thou, my companion, my
“ guide, mine own familiar friend!” But what! — because he was *my brother*, *my*
friend, shall I be more implacable on that account? The reverse ought to be my conduct.

duct. If my struggle be greater, so will be my conquest. What says our Lord, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault *between thee and him alone*"—silence and secresy are least apt to irritate or offend on these delicate occasions — "if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother;" if he will not hear thee, thou hast acquitted thine own soul; but cease not to pray for his welfare, and endeavour, by every means, to promote his temporal and eternal interest. Leave the denunciation, or infliction of vengeance, to him in whose hand is the *well-aimed thunderbolt*. God knows on whose head it may light; but let our hands be cleansed from sin, and our hearts from malice. "Except ye become *as little children*"—innocent and harmless as they are—"ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

II. While we look around us in the present age of the world, and see the devastation of many lately flourishing nations, and hear the dreadful crash of kingdoms, surely we need no other argument to convince us of the fatal effects of political animosities. "Love

“your enemies”—in this case would be an healing balm to myriads of mankind. Pray God avert the melancholy effects of party spirit in this often-favoured Isle! The calm sequestered eye cannot but often fill, at the sight of public danger, arising from the baleful passions of pretended friends. They are not the cool collected opinions of wise counsellors which are heard, but the depreciating rancour of private and personal resentment. It is not always to save a country that declamation raises her voice, but to overturn the foundations of established governments, and seek plunder among the ruins. To effect this, we listen to expressions which shock our ears. “As much as “I *detest* him,” said one great orator lately of another, in the midst of the great council of the nation, “I *detest* him still more for “this.”—Is this the language of decency, is it the language of placability, is it the language of a *Christian*? I would not tolerate this in any party. Calm, or even *warm* discussions, religion forbids not, on subjects of importance. But personal enmities at all times, and on all occasions, are contrary to

to decorum ; and far, far from the duty of christianity.

My pen will not cease on this subject, till I have copied an important passage from the writings of Mr. Addison. Humble though I am, I beg leave to recommend it to the consideration of statesmen, which I would rather do in his language than my own.

“ There cannot a greater judgment befall
“ a country than such a dreadful spirit of
“ division as rends a government into two
“ distinct people, and makes them greater
“ strangers, and more averse to one another,
“ than if they were actually two different
“ nations. The effects of such a division
“ are pernicious to the last degree, not only
“ with regard to those advantages which
“ they give the common enemy, but to
“ those private evils which they produce in
“ the heart of almost every particular person.
“ This influence is fatal both to men’s
“ morals and understandings ; it sinks the
“ virtue of a nation, and not only so, but
“ destroys even common sense. With real
“ grief of heart, I take notice, that the
“ minds of many good men among us, appear
“ N “ pear

“pear soured with party-principles, and
 “alienated one from another in such a
 “manner, as seems to me altogether incon-
 “sistent with the dictates either of reason
 “or religion *.”

As I have endeavoured to discountenance the virulence of political differences at home, I would venture to recommend the same moderation with regard to those neighbouring nations, which are sometimes distinguished by the name of *natural enemies*. In the first place, I give my pointed opposition to the *name*; for however enmity may be natural in a man's own breast, it never can be so with respect to our fellow creatures. Though public offences may be committed, it is contrary to true policy, it is contrary to true religion, to make reprisals by invective. The balance of nations is in the hand of Providence. God only knows on which side justice reigns. It is more than probable, that in most cases the offence is mutual: in all, it is certain, much must be forgiven. “Be not there-
 “fore wise in *your own conceits*. Recom-

* Spect. 125.

“pence

“ pence to no man evil for evil.” This moral précept is as true of national quarrels, as of those of individuals. “ If thine
“ enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst,
“ give him drink ; for in so doing (as the artificer melts his metal when he uses it, by exposing it to the action of heated fuel, so “ thou shalt heap coals of fire on his
“ head.” Even the horrors of war have been mitigated by the introduction of christianity—let christianity then have its proper effect—“ be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Convinced though we may be, even by rational reflection, that we ought to regard our enemies with an eye of kindness, yet without the interposition of divine grace we shall not be enabled to perform so acceptable a service. The natural passions, urged on by the impetuosity of human conduct, find many enemies to combat : but he who is influenced by a mild and compassionate religion, looks upon no man as an *enemy* ; and if he has suffered an injury, he is the first to forgive it too.

N° XXVIII.

On the Christian Sabbath.

So sung they, and the empyrean rung
With halleluiahs: *Thus was sabbath kept.*

MILTON.

WERE the wisest of men, and the profoundest of scholars, to consult upon a method the most likely to impress an important doctrine upon the world, it is probable that they would adopt that which christianity pursues. I do not say that human reason could devise these, or means like these, to produce this important end, but when they are propounded from the depths of divine wisdom, the reason of man seizes the happy revelation, and converts it to the benefit of mankind.

Various are the plans of Providence to effect its own designs. Like the revolution
of

of the planets around the globe, each keeps its proper order, yet sheds that degree of lustre which it was originally intended to produce. This has constantly been the case since the sun began its course; and with progressive brightness, knowledge, of which that is the emblem, will continually increase still more and more unto a perfect day. Christianity is one of those steps of knowledge which brings us nearer to perfection, and the ordinances which she prescribes are the means of accomplishing this great purpose. So long as the world remains, external institutions must remain likewise. We are creatures of *sense*, and require an outward as well as an inward motive of action. It is the praise of christianity that these motives are so united under her influence as to work together for the benefit of society. Baptism and the Lord's supper, hearing, reading, praying, &c. are all of this nature; and to these I may add, a proper observation of the christian sabbath.

But before I pursue this latter subject, I must premise that it is not with a super-

stitious reverence that any of these means or ordinances must be enjoyed. The purest food may be the vehicle of the most subtle poison. It is neither the washing of water, nor partaking of bread and wine—it is neither attending to the most eloquent preacher, nor reading the most elegant discourse—it is not even lifting up our *hands* to heaven, or submitting to the ordinary formalities of a sabbath, that will entitle us to the privileges of the gospel. It is the inward impression alone, to which these, important though they be, are only auxiliaries, that must give an efficacy to all our performances. The Spirit of God which moved upon the great abyss at the création of the world, still moves upon the surface of the Christian's heart. It is the influence of this Spirit which gives life to our religious services; it is this which alters the corrupt habits and dispositions of men; it is this which changes their very nature, which makes the adulterer chaste, the drunkard sober, the voluptuary a lover of God, the revengeful mild and placable, and the

the proud reasoning philosopher an humble teachable Christian.

Does our reason inform us that of all changes, this would be the most desirable? Does our experience shew us, that where this change has been made, man is the most happy? Let us then use those ordinances with thankfulness, which the goodness of God has provided to effect it. At this time I shall assume it as a known truth, that the christian sabbath draws within its circle every duty the best calculated for the present or future welfare of mankind. It is this which hath preserved the christian religion to this day in the world, and is the greatest security of its being safely and happily transmitted to posterity. What was the first step which a nation of philosophers took to carry into effect a grand conspiracy against the civil and religious interests of thousands? They extirpated their teachers, shut up their churches, and abolished the sabbath.

“ Were it not for that rest which is ap-
“ pointed on the first day of the week, and
“ the solemn meetings which then take

“ place for the purpose of social worship
 “ and religious instruction, the labours of
 “ the common people, that is, of the
 “ greatest part of mankind, would be un-
 “ supportable; most of them would live
 “ and die in utter ignorance, and those
 “ who are remote from neighbours would
 “ become barbarians. Bad as the world is,
 “ there is reason to think that it would
 “ be a thousand times worse, if it were
 “ not for this institution; the wisdom
 “ and humanity of which can never be
 “ sufficiently admired; and if it were as
 “ strictly observed as it is positively com-
 “ manded, would operate with singular
 “ efficacy, in advancing public prosperity
 “ as well as private virtue*.”

The division of time into weeks is more
 than a probable evidence in favour of
 christianity, as it was in days of old, of the
 religion of the Jews. Unless we consider
 the Mosaic history of the creation as
 authentic, how can we account for that
 ancient, and almost universal practice of

* Beattie's Elements of Moral Science, Vol. II. p. 86.

dividing

dividing time into portions of seven days? The computation of time by days, months, and years, has a foundation in nature; alternate light and darkness form a visible period; we behold too the varied phases of the moon, and observe the apparent revolution of the sun. But there is no principle that I know of, which directs or suggests a regular period of seven days in the ordinary occurrences of human life. For this we must look to the original record of that important moment when "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that *in it* he had rested from all his work."

"The Syrians, Egyptians, and most of the oriental nations, appear to have used this division of time from all antiquity: though it did not get footing in the west, till christianity brought it in: the Romans reckoning their days not by sevenths but by ninths, and the ancient Greeks by decads or tenths; [which last computation has been adopted by their imitators, the modern directors of France.] The use of weeks among the heathens

“ of the east is supposed to be a remain
 “ of the tradition of the creation which
 “ they had still retained with divers others.
 “ This is the opinion of Grotius, who
 “ likewise proves, that not only throughout
 “ the east, but even among the Greeks,
 “ Italians, Celtæ, Sclavi, and even the
 “ Romans themselves, the days were di-
 “ vided into weeks, and that the seventh
 “ day was in extraordinary veneration *.”

Whatever may have been the practice of
 ancient nations, whatever may be the prac-
 tice of modern ones, let us hold it as an
 incontrovertible opinion, that the observa-
 tion of the sabbath is an indispensable
 obligation of a Christian, and that to him
 it is attended with peculiar and discrimi-
 nating advantages. In addition to the
 important motives of the Jews, he possesses
 a superior object of attention, an object not
 of contemplation only but of adoration in
him “ who was *Lord also of the sabbath-*
day.” That we might never want a moment
 of leisure to contemplate the great import-

* Encyclopedia—Rees. Verb *week*; and Bishop Patrick
 on Gen. c. ii. v. 3.

ance of redemption by Jesus Christ, the day of rest was changed by the general practice of the disciples of our Lord, influenced, no doubt, by the Spirit of God, to a day of still superior obligation, the day on which he triumphed over death and the grave, by a glorious resurrection from the dead. On that day was our redemption completed; we received, as it were, a *new creation*; we were rescued from more than Egyptian bondage, and were made children of God, *being children of the redemption*. This, therefore, is a never-failing subject of a Christian's meditation on the Lord's day: "that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

It is on the return of this day in all christian countries, that all the springs of religion are set in motion: and a chearful day it is to every sincere disciple of Christ. The good pastor instructs his flock, the good master his family, the good parent his beseeching offspring. Friend meets friend with chearful countenance: enmities are forgotten, and enemies are reconciled.

The benevolent principles of christianity prevail in every breast. Every man is willing to receive or impart instruction. All are gasping for that salvation which the divine goodness, hath made manifest to all. Places of public worship are open, and invite the pious worshipper. The chiming bells are heard on every hill: it is the very spring-time of devotion—and happy is the man who seizes the golden opportunity which every village affords.

The complaints of David, when deprived of the public worship of God, are beautiful and pathetic. “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!” Ps. 42. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” Ps. 84.

I shall be pardoned for introducing in this place the beautiful simplicity and amiable piety of the following stanza, which

is delivered in the assumed character of the solitary tenant of an uninhabited island:—

- “ Religion! what treasure untold
- “ Resides in that heav’nly word!
- “ More precious than silver or gold,
- “ Or all that this earth can afford.
- “ But the sound of the church-going bell
- “ These vallies and rocks never heard,
- “ Ne’er sigh’d at the sound of a knell,
- “ Or smil’d when a sabbath appear’d *.”

He who can, unmoved, hear the invitation of instruction repeated every sabbath-day, who can shut himself up in his counting house, or wander about his farm, regardless of this important mean of salvation, is in a more forlorn and deserted state than Alexander Selkirk on the island of Juan Fernáñez.

My brother! you pretend to be a Christian, and hope for happiness in another life; you hope for it too in the way which Jesus Christ has appointed. Is it not then a part of his religion to *hallow his sabbaths*? How can you profane this holy day by a thousand improper amusements and employ-

* Cowper.

ments?

ments? How can you profane it by actions that are unlawful upon any day? It is a strange profession of religion which will encourage a person to expect the blessed hope of everlasting life, the substantial rewards of virtuous conduct, who yet disobeys those precepts and slights that faith, which affords the only sure foundation for such an expectation. Shew yourself then, my friend! my brother! sincere in your professions. Accept the precious offer of this holy day; it may be unto thee a day of grace and salvation. A time may come when a day, an hour, will be valuable indeed. “The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but *he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.*”

Nº XXIX.

On the Death of the Righteous.

The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven:

YOUNG.

THE influence of habit on the actions of men is of so great importance to their happiness, that the moralist seizes upon this post when he wishes to recommend the practice of virtue. So sensible are we of this truth, that, in many instances, we chuse rather to retain an evil custom than to be at the labour of changing it. The fatal effects of inveterate evil habits are the subjects of daily lamentation: whilst we sometimes happily behold, as a counterpart to this dark picture, the beneficial consequences of progressive goodness.

It

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It is in this light that the gospel opens its treasures to a good man. It does not at once, as in the case of St. Paul on his journey to Damascus, enrich him with its graces ; but it follows the course of nature, and gradually makes him sensible of their value, before it bestows the fulness of its gifts. For this reason, christian perfection lies more within the reach of man. He does not behold it at an unapproachable distance, but feels himself, through the operations of divine grace, making a gradual advance towards it. He does not cease from the pursuit, conscious of his own inability to attain it, but relying on the certain, though insensible, assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, he proceeds along the sacred road, nor doubts that all his efforts will be crowned with success. His ardour in this pursuit is not damped by a reflection on his own unworthiness ; for he considers the nature of that perfection required by the gospel of Christ ; and is satisfied that it consists not in having no failings, no imperfections of nature, but in the constant resistance which the good man makes to such

such intruding enemies, and in that “victory which overcometh the world:” that it consists not in extraordinary acts of virtue, which lie far out of the most frequented walks of men, but in performing the ordinary duties of human life upon the principles of christianity.

“When religion is made a science, there is nothing more intricate; when it is made a duty, nothing more easy.” Every day’s experience, and every moment’s reflection confirm the observation; for if we study the religion of Christ as it was plainly delivered to the world, we shall find nothing to puzzle or perplex, every thing to instruct and improve. It discourages no man’s pretensions to salvation, but calls upon all men, the wearied and heavy laden, the publican and the harlot, to take upon them its light burthen and its easy yoke. The well instructed mind exults in the revealed motives of the gospel, and dwells with pleasure on its duties. It receives the communication of the will of heaven with gratitude, and with rapture accepts the *unspeakable*
gift

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gift which alone “ can make us wise unto
“ salvation.”

These are the foundations of a good man's life ; and what is more, these are the reflections which will support his soul, when every other support is gone.

Having, in the foregoing meditations, pursued a regular train of thought, from the first motion of the mind, that, a revelation is necessary to effect the salvation of men, to a consideration of the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, and of those ordinances appointed by that Spirit as means of accomplishing this great end—where ought my pen to rest or my heart repose, but in that test of the christian faith, the death-bed of the righteous? Here it will be allowed that the mask falls from the countenance, and that the inmost recesses of human thought are “ naked and open before him with whom we have to do.” It is here the graces of a good life operate to the advantage of their possessor. From the earliest impulse of virtue, when the reason of the man is first protected, cherished,
pro-

promoted by the good Spirit of God, to that awful, that important crisis when the parting breath stands quivering on the lip, religion teaches us to look forward to the future state of man. For this state we are prepared by previous trials, and as we bear them with resolution, avoid them with detestation, or shrink from them with cowardice, according to the different modes by which we are attacked, we have reason to expect a correspondent punishment or reward.

He who reflects on religion with that disengagement from prejudice which he ought, will find that she possesses many secret and unsuspected charms. True it is, the meditations of the wicked are dreary enough—"without are fightings, within are fears." Such will never expect an happy termination of their career. But that breast within which every christian grace resides, feels a different sentiment—"the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

"Heav'n

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“Heav’n waits not the last moment : owns her friends

“On this side death ; and points them out to men.”

Every thing relating to religion is of a pleasing aspect : it is guilt or superstition only which shades the picture, and produces that gloom and horror which those ascribe to it who know it only by its name.

The difference between the latter hours of the righteous and the wicked is very striking : it arises from this short history of their feelings and expectations : the heart of the former is exalted by a well founded *hope* of reward, the heart of the latter is too justly depressed by a *fear* of punishment.—“Pray you that can—I never
“prayed—I cannot pray. My principles
“have poisoned my friend ; my extravagance has beggared my boy ; my unkindness has murdered my wife !—and is
“there another hell ?—Oh ! thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent, Lord God !
“Hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from
“thy frown.” Such were the dying horrors of the wretched Altamont*.—“I have

* Young’s Centaur not fabulous.

“sent

“ sent for you that you might see how a
“ Christian can die,” were among the last
expressions of the virtuous Addison.

—— Having before considered the end
of the wicked, I reserved the reflection on
the death of the righteous, as a pleasing
topic to conclude these my imperfect medi-
tations. ——

Many talk of death who never think seri-
ously about it, and many think of death
who never venture to pronounce its name.
If there are any good men who labour under
the impression of this fear, let us ascribe it
to its proper motive. It is not the appear-
ance, or approach, of death which terrifies
them, but the apprehension of their own
unworthiness to present themselves before a
God “ who is of purer eyes than to behold
“ iniquity.” This consideration should re-
move any unjust reflections, which the
healthy and the daring may cast upon the
last moments even of a good man. A
modest diffidence and humble demeanour
may often be mistaken for an unwarrantable
fear. Besides, the frame of our bodily con-
structions is essentially different, and the
man

man of nerve and strength is no competent judge of another's feelings. This too may account for that undaunted countenance which many wicked men have shewn in the hour of their dissolution. I dare not add, though religion will justify the observation, that the grace of God may have taken its departure from them: for it is as impossible for the sinful man to fathom the depths of the divine counsel, as it is unbecoming our weakness to point out the particular objects of almighty displeasure.

It is some comfort to reflect that far the greater part of mankind quit the scene of life with ease and composure. I presume that every man, whose profession leads him to be a frequent visitor at the bed of the dying, will confirm this observation. A writer in a popular publication describes this easy transition in the following words. "To go out of the world is as easy as to enter into it, and, in a philosophical view, seems more easy. Many things appear more formidable in imagination than they are in reality. When we are in perfect health and spirits, we have an unpleasant idea

“ idea of sickness and confinement; but
“ when we are actually sick and confined,
“ we are more insensible to the pleasures
“ and gaieties of the world. We consider
“ them as vanities and follies, and have not
“ the least inclination to pass a second
“ time through the same dangerous and
“ tumultuous scene. As our distemper in-
“ creases we begin to be disgusted with
“ life, and wish to be released. The pros-
“ pect of death begins to become more
“ familiar as we approach. In proportion
“ as nature fails, we lose the power of sen-
“ sation; the interval is short and tran-
“ sient; the change imperceptible. No
“ reflection, and consequently no pain suc-
“ ceeds. The soul forgets her anxiety, and
“ calmly sinks into repose.”

This may be a true delineation of the de-
caying and decayed powers of nature; but
religion hopes for something more; she
hopes that her last voice, her last sigh, her
last sensation, will fondly rest upon the
author of her salvation. She wishes indeed
that her transition may be easy; but her
enrap-

enraptured eye darts far beyond the surrounding darkness, being fully satisfied that
 “ the sufferings of this present life are not
 “ worthy to be compared with the glories
 “ which shall be revealed.”

The writer deceives himself, I will not suppose with an intention of flattering the departing, when he says, that *in proportion as nature fails, we lose the power of sensation.* This is true only of the last extremity of sickness. The mind does not in all cases, nor even in most, participate with the infirmities of the body. That often appears in greater strength when the spark of existence is just expiring, and has been distinguished by the name of *an illumination before death.* When the great and good Dr. Johnson, whose religious or constitutional fears of death are often cast into the scale against him, was in his last sickness, with that native fortitude which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, he desired his friend and physician to tell him plainly whether he could recover, and being informed that he could
 not,

not, without a miracle—" then," said he, " I will take no more physic, not even my opiates, for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God, *unclouded* *."

To be disgusted with the world too, is not the proper motive of wishing for death. The vanities and follies of life no doubt are proper objects of disgust in every period of our existence. But life itself comes not under that description. It was given us as a blessing: it ought to be received and valued as such. In it are many and important duties to be performed; the future happiness of our souls depends upon the proper employment of our lives; every moment is of sterling worth; and therefore is no otherwise to be esteemed a trifle than in comparison with the never-ending days of eternity. What says St. Paul? " I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

The first beam of reward which breaks in upon the righteous is in the moment of his

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, Vol. III, p. 674.

dissolution, or at such times as he is preparing his soul for another state of existence. By a contemplation on the promises of the gospel, his mind reposes in security. He knows *on whom he has believed*, he is satisfied for what important purposes his faith was required; and the glad tidings of salvation strengthen and refresh his soul in that awful hour. And here it is that the gospel of Christ justly triumphs, by removing the sting of death, and opening a prospect of the everlasting ages.

If we consider death as a gloomy passage to an unknown country, if we look upon it only as a punishment of those sins, which we are conscious of having committed, there could be little comfort, nay, there must be great apprehensions, at its arrival; but when we see in it a sacrifice for sin, infinitely inferior indeed to, but deriving its efficacy from the sacrifice which Christ made upon the cross for the sins of all mankind, what comfort and consolation then arises in the soul? The christian principle here supports our spirits; and if our faith in Christ be

4

equal

equal to our wants, we shall indeed be
“ *more than conquerors.*” “ If by one
“ man’s offence death reigned by one ;
“ much more they which receive abundance
“ of grace, and of the gift of righteousness,
“ shall reign in one Jesus Christ—for as
“ by one man’s disobedience many were
“ made sinners, so by the obedience of one
“ shall many be made righteous.”

God knows how the best of us may be-
have upon the bed of death ; but be assured
of this as a constant and invariable truth,
that there can be no solid satisfaction in
this life till we have overcome the fear of
death, and that the only way to obtain this
conquest, is to search diligently the things
of Christ—to be satisfied that it is only by
him, and through him, that life and im-
mortality are manifested to the world—that
it is by his free adoption that we are ac-
knowledged as his children—and that by
his grace, if we perform his will, we shall
finally be saved. “ The gift of God is
“ eternal life through Jesus Christ our

“ Lord. The sting of death is sin—but
 “ thanks be to God which giveth us the
 “ victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Impressed with these sentiments, blessed be God ! I have seen the righteous expire. I have beheld him gradually disengage himself from the employments and interruptions of life ; nay, ‘I have beheld him, painful though it was, with a fortitude becoming his situation, take a last farewell of those near and dear connections which, under God, were the solace of every pain, the balm of every wound : confident that at the resurrection in the last day, those who love God, will God bring with him. As the world recedes, a new order of things appear to rise before him—he sees the sign of the Son of man in heaven—placid is his eye as he turns it on the departing earth—rapturous is his heart as he contemplates his speedy flight to heaven, and the glories about to be revealed to him. “ Oh death ! “ where is *now* thy sting ? Oh grave ! “ where is *now* thy victory ?

In

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In the whole circle of human life, I know not a scene of greater exultation, than the last moments of a good Christian.

“ Let me die the death of the righteous,
“ and may my last end be like his !”

N° XXX.

Recapitulation.

As when ———

A panting traveller, some rising ground,
Some small ascent, has gain'd, he turns him round,
And measures with his eye the various vale,
The fields, woods, meads, and rivers he has past;
Thus I —

YOUNG.

As the purest intellectual pleasure arises from the proper application of the mind in the investigation of truth, so a review of the several arguments which lead to so desirable an end, cannot but contribute, in a considerable degree, to enforce that mental satisfaction, and confirm that belief which is settled on so firm a basis. And when the truth we seek after *springeth up into everlasting life*, which is the case with all our religious researches, the pursuit in some measure rewards itself, anticipating a state of

of being, eternal in its duration, supreme in its enjoyment.

The mind of man, ever active and employed, darts through the sphere of every untired situation, and by the energies of nature endeavours to find out a point of rest. If he fail in attaining his purpose, it can only be ascribed to his setting forward on a false principle. Correct this with caution at the first entrance on a course of reasoning, and the result must be fortunate. But if we neither reckon longitude nor latitude when we launch into the open sea, if neither sun nor star brighten our navigation, our vessel must unavoidably foundered amongst those shoals and quicksands, which a little previous study would have taught us to avoid.

As there is but one harbour which the navigators of human life should seek, so there is but one track which they should follow in its pursuit; that track, to drop the metaphor, is religion. It is of importance, therefore, to every rational being to ascertain its truth: and this, no doubt, is the best employment of our reasoning faculties.

ties. I do not indeed say that the strongest powers of reason can fathom the depths of almighty wisdom, neither is religion in any sense subservient to its dictates—"as the
"heavens are higher than the earth, so are
"my ways," saith God, "higher than
"your ways, and my thoughts than your
"thoughts." But as God has been pleased to make man a free-agent, and endue him with the liberty of judging of that evidence of divine truth which is laid before him, it becomes an indispensable duty to make a right use of our reason in so important an investigation.

In the preceding pages I have endeavoured to preserve such a connection of thought, as may seem to offer itself to the plainest understanding, when reflecting on the great blessings of christianity. I am aware that the subject I have chosen, branches out into a variety of considerations, both of doctrine and discipline, too copious for discussion on my present plan. But as my object has only been to unite a firm belief with a sincere practice, I humbly beseech the Spirit of divine truth to
accept

accept these imperfect reflections, and permit that they may not have been made in vain !

The hurry of the world may be the excuse of many, for not arranging those thoughts which involve their dearest interests ; but it is not, neither ought it to be, mine. The calm leisure of rural life affords many moments of reflection ; and we should remember that these golden opportunities are among those talents which will be required at our hands.

As a traveller, from some rising ground, surveys the country he has past with mingled comfort and delight, so let me, with similar sensations, look back upon my short intellectual journey.

N°

- I. It has been my endeavour to shew that recollection is absolutely necessary for the improvement of the human
- II. soul : and that retirement is the school
- III. of recollection. The proper object of that meditation which is easiest to be found in sequestered situations, but not difficult in the most frequented, is the

revealed religion of the gospel ; for without such a revelation of the will of God, with respect both to its motives and its promises, (as is evident from the character and conduct of the best heathen philosophers;) virtue would want its

- iv. firmest support.—To establish this principle, let us begin with the first rudiments of reflection : we did not make ourselves—there must therefore exist an almighty Being from whom we, and all creatures, proceed. Nature proclaims this, revelation confirms it.—
- v. But wickedness wants an apology ; and behold ! the wicked man *professes* himself to be no believer in God : but notwithstanding his professions, even natural reason is true to itself, and his
- vi. *unbelief* is doubtful.—From hence arises another gradation of infidelity ; if a man *must* believe in God, and from prejudice does not chuse to acknowledge a revelation, he calls himself a *deist* ! a dangerous state ! such a belief, however, is inconsistent ; because, if there is a God, he must be all-powerful,

powerful, &c. and if all-powerful, he *may* reveal himself to man, in whatever way he pleases. Under this head is sheltered every disturber of human peace, the Paynes and revolutionists of the day.

VII. The belief of a God, even according to the dictates of natural religion, implies the belief of a future state—

revelation renders this certain; and its effects are of the highest importance

to man, whether we consider him as an accountable creature *applying to*

his hopes, for hopes of salvation the

VIII. good man cannot but possess — *his fears*, for fear must be predominant

IX. in the breast of the wicked—as a *member of society*, impelling him to deeds

X. of virtuous daring—or *as an individual*, expecting personal happiness in this world, and looking forward to absolute enjoyment in the next.

XI. The certainty of a future state, and, of course, the important influences arising from it, must originate in a belief of divine revelation. It be-

comes,

comes, then, an inquiry, which every man should make, whether the book which contains the knowledge of the revelation of a future world, and of those momentous truths which ensure the salvation of mankind, be authentic. A careful examination of

xii. proofs must convince us of this. The end and design of the Holy Scriptures are to introduce a knowledge of the Author of the christian revelation. For this purpose many external evidences are offered. He who reads

xiii. cannot but understand. Besides the several distinct evidences of christianity, one great argument arises from the concurring testimonies of the several writers of the Old and New

xiv. Testaments.—Above all, the *inward evidence* of the Spirit is highly to be respected, and principally to be studied. We may read commentators and peruse history, but if the will of God be not written in the heart with something more than the labours of the hand or head, vain will be our belief;

nay,

may, it may be truly said, that we do not believe at all.

xv. Having meditated on the various and important evidences of christianity, it may reasonably be expected that our faith should be established on a sure foundation; and that we should feel the strongest incitements to enroll ourselves as members of that society, which offers to us such great and precious promises. *The ceremony of baptism* first introduces us to Christ, and puts a seal of strong conviction on the mind. Whether this happens to the infant, or the adult, its effects are equally interesting. The first dawn of reason beholds the propriety, the necessity of this sacramental test, and its last departing rays confirm the comfortable assurance.

xvi. Having now become members of Christ, our next step is to be children of God; and this, christianity effects by its influence on the heart. Within the *heart* of man, religion, like the rod of an enchanter, raises scenes of happiness;

happiness; not a light ideal happiness, the offspring of fancy and delusion; but, in every respect, genuine and substantial. It does not produce the characters of men as objects of admiration only; but it generates goodness in the inmost folds of the human heart—and says, “this is the
 “happy consequence of *the* grace
 of God which bringeth salvation.”—

XVII. As the introduction of turbulent and unruly *passions* was the miserable effect of the fall of man, the religion of Christ steps forward to subdue them. The natural man can no more compose the agitated ocean than his own breast: happy is it for him that the Ruler of the waves is stronger than

XVIII. he! To effect this purpose the gospel affords us many helps: it shews us the way; and assists us on the road. It does not indeed irresistibly overpower the actions of men, for that would destroy the free agency of his nature, but places him in a condition to conquer himself through the gentle

gentle influences of the divine Spirit.

— “ I can do all things through

“ Christ which strengtheneth me.”

xix. If religion sheweth its power in the regulation of the heart of man, it is no less powerful in influencing the *disposition of the mind*. Here it is that its effects are most conspicuous. Here it is that religion displays its true temper, and with its cheering aspect allures and delights its votaries. The good Christian ought to be the most cheerful

xx. man in the world.—And in many respects he is so; for that sacred principle which regulates the passions and improves the heart, which softens the disposition, and shares in the general habits of the man, cannot but produce that most desirable of all effects, *peace of soul and a religious mind*. This is indeed delightful harmony: it touches the true chord of all the human affections, and anticipates the sweet symphony of heaven.

xxi.

- xxi. This disposition of mind, the necessary result of holy expectations, is to be acquired and preserved by a variety of means offered by religion for this purpose. The first of these is *meditation*. Thought rallies the straggling forces of the understanding, and prepares them for severer duty. If we never *think*, how can we expect the rewards which are the consequence of thought? If we reflect on the various comforts of a religious life, and meditate on those blessings which a knowledge of the gospel can only bestow, the grace of God will rest upon our hearts, and the peace of God will visit our understandings.
- xxii. Another and important mean of procuring this happy disposition is *prayer*; prayer upon its proper principle; not the cold formality too frequently distinguished by this name, but the fervent and sincere offerings of a grateful mind;—
- xxiii. nay, we must proceed further, and by a *general habitual devotion*, endeavour,

deavour, as it were, to make our duty a part of ourselves. This is indeed the way, as far as in us lies, to adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

But the gospel offers other means of positive injunction to work together for this good end, the final
 xxiv. salvation of men. The offices of baptism, and the Lord's supper, are essential ordinances for the conveyance of these graces to mankind. The restoration of man by the sacrifice of Christ, is pathetically commemorated and received in *the celebration of the Eucharist*, which is truly *an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*.

Besides these, there are many other external resources, though not of equal importance, yet essentially contributing to effect the same purpose.
 xxv. *Books of piety and religion* here offer
 xxvi. their assistance: and the *friendship of the good* steps forward as a powerful auxiliary. If the gay, the rationally

- tionally gay, be called upon to cheer the gloomy hour of the pious ; the friendship of the pious may well be resorted to, not only to moderate the sallies of intemperate gaiety, but to raise the melancholy and desponding, to a lively hope of the blessings of religion. The gospel of Christ refines our friendships, and teaches us the doctrine of love on the best of motives. Our friendships, on the other hand, help to confirm us in the belief and practice of christian duties by those mutual attentions both to our temporal and eternal interests which the gospel requires of us as children of the same father, and members of the same
- xxvii. faith.—But the gospel still goes further, as it endeavours to eradicate every party prejudice as well as petty enmity from the human breast ; and directs us, as the touchstone of our religion, to love *even our enemies*.
- xxviii. To produce in the heart of man every advantage of revelation, no duty

duty necessary for this purpose should be omitted. *The institution of the sabbath* comes under this description ; and under the same head is implied every benefit of public and private worship. This is indeed an important mean of salvation, recalling the mind from secular cares, and fixing it on that *day of rest* which, however distant it may appear, is much nearer than most of us suspect. But the sabbath is also distinguished by an higher name—it is called the *Lord's day* from the important event of the resurrection which happened on it. The use then which Christians should make of this day is evident : they should review upon it the great obligations of religion, the fall of man from righteousness, and his restoration to divine favour by the coming of Christ. Let us regard it too as a resting place in our travels through life, not only for the sake of looking back on the chequered

checquered landscape we have passed, but for the purpose of refreshing our souls for greater exertions in the prosecution of our journey.

xxix. Thus relieved by grace, and strengthened in the inner man, we may be prepared for the *last scene of all in this eventful history*, our removal to the world of spirits. If we wish that removal to be happy, let us in time make due preparation for it. Let us withdraw into the shade of solitude, our closet, or our garden, and commune diligently with our own hearts : let us pursue that train of serious thought which may most easily and happily influence our conduct in life, and lead us, through the merits of Christ, to the final blessing of a good man's death.

THE END.

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